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The Popular Series

Issued Monthly.



THE STOLEN VAIL

BY E. WERNER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY MARY J. SAFFORD.

—AND—

THE UNSIGNED WILL

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY MRS. D. M. LOWREY.

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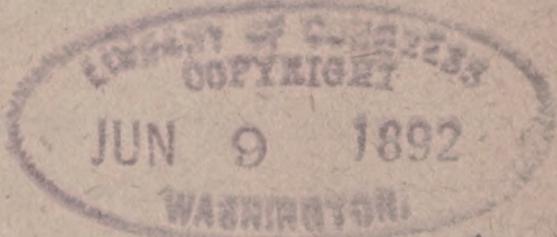
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NEW YORK:

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THE STOLEN VAIL.



ES, it's perfectly true about the vail. Though the story is so old, hundreds of years, it will come true now just the same. You need only try it. If a youth has a sweetheart, he must steal her vail—a kerchief will do, too, if she is a mountain maiden—then she'll never forget him. Day and night her thoughts will dwell with him, she can't shut him out of her mind. But the vail must be stolen."

The speaker was an old mountaineer clad in a coarse woolen jacket and knee breeches. He had just related one of the mountain legends in which the Alps are so rich, and now, with the

utmost seriousness, mentioned the old popular superstition connected with it. His audience, a young lady and a half-grown lad, listened with the deepest attention to the strange story, while the two gentlemen who were reclining on the turf a short distance off, appeared somewhat incredulous. The elder, a man advanced in years, with grey hair and pleasant, kindly expression, merely smiled, while the other's countenance expressed the keenest contempt.

"Just hear that nonsense," he muttered, under his breath. "And the fellow speaks in a tone of the utmost sincerity. These superstitious people are a long way from the light of reason."

"Why excite yourself about the matter, my dear Normann?" replied his companion, calmly. "Let the common people keep the remnant of poesy which still lingers in their legends and customs. It is to be found nowhere else."

"And it isn't needed," grumbled Normann. "Life goes on very well without it."

"Perhaps so, but we take a different view at twenty. I committed youthful follies and even perpetrated the offence of writing verses on several occasions. Oh, you needn't be horrified. They were addressed to the woman who was then my betrothed bride and afterwards became my wife. Under such circumstances, even the man of science touches the chords of the lyre. But I suppose you never did so?"

"I? What can you be thinking of, Professor Herwig?"

"Don't be vexed," answered Herwig, laughing. "No one would suspect you of it. Well, Dora, have you heard enough of the wonderful tale?"

The last question was addressed to the young lady who had just approached—a girl of twenty, fresh and charming in her becoming blue travelling dress. The light straw hat twined with a blue vail, which rested on her brown braids, shaded a rosy face with clear brown eyes and two dimples in the cheeks, whence peered the spirit of mischief, while her whole bearing revealed that exuberance of health and vitality known only to youth.

"Oh, papa, I'm so fond of talking with the peasants, and when Sepp begins to relate a mountain legend he finds me a most attentive listener. Isn't it delightful up here? See how lovely the village looks down below us. How the lake sparkles in the sunshine! And it must be still more beautiful on the summit, whence we can overlook all the mountain peaks. I've never been there, but we're going to climb up to-day, aren't we, Friedel?"

She turned to the boy, who was also dressed in city fashion, though his worn and shabby garments showed that he was a servant. He was probably thirteen or fourteen years old, and had grown up tall, but thin and delicate. Thick

fair hair framed a pale face which looked very pitiful with its sickly complexion and dark circles around the eyes. Only the large blue eyes themselves were attractive, though they did not sparkle with mirth and joy like Dora's. On the contrary, they had a very weary, sorrowful expression, though they brightened when the wide view from the mountain top was mentioned. The lad was apparently one of those poor, stunted denizens of the city, who grow up in narrow streets and dark courtyards, with little light and air or the sunshine of life. Probably this was the first time he had gazed into the broad free world of the mountains.

He cast a half timid, half questioning glance at Professor Normann, who said, carelessly :

“ Of course the boy will go. Who is to carry the luggage ? ”

“ I shall stay here,” announced Herwig. “ The last part of the way seems to be rather tiresome, and I hear that it’s a good hour’s walk to the top. You’ll take charge of my daughter, won’t you, my dear Normann ? I’ll wait where I am.”

The young lady did not seem very much pleased with the escort proposed. “ The professor cares very little for mountain scenery,” she remarked sarcastically, with a toss of her dainty head.

"No, I'm not inclined to rave over landscapes," was the somewhat brusque retort.

"Then why do you travel?"

"To pursue my studies in the natural sciences. That is my sole object."

"You needn't emphasize your words so strongly," cried Dora, laughing. "I don't suspect that you are going in pursuit of a vail, like the young huntsman of whom Sepp has just told us. Did you hear the story?"

The professor was evidently vexed that any one should presume to jest with him. He drew himself up stiffly.

"If you find any pleasure in such children's tales, Fräulein Dora—unfortunately, I cannot share it," he replied, going to a rock a short distance off and taking from it a bit of moss which he carefully examined.

"Dear me, how ungracious!" murmured the young girl under her breath. "Papa, you certainly chose a very disagreeable traveling companion this time."

"Normann certainly is not affable," Herwig answered. "He really takes no little trouble to be the reverse, whenever a third person is present; one must be alone with him to appreciate his true character. As I have already told you, his scientific work is admirable and he is in a fair way to become a celebrity in his special department."

Dora's face plainly showed that a commonplace but cheerful traveling companion would have been far more welcome to her than this unamiable future celebrity. She made a wry face.

"I don't see why he must come where we are. Or, if he would only let mountain rambles alone, but he always drags after us and spoils the whole beautiful Alpine world with his sour face and heartless sneers."

Her father did not contradict her, for he was of the same opinion. Spite of his respect for Normann's ability, his character was not fully congenial. His bluntness and neglect of social courtesies frequently annoyed him. Still, he could not object when his colleague, whom he happened to meet in Schlehdorf, and with whom he had for years maintained constant communication in regard to scientific matters, offered to join him in his excursions.

"He shows that he has had little intercourse with the world, Dora," the father answered, evasively. "He is a scholar, my child, who thinks of nothing but his studies and is not accustomed to heed anything else."

"No, that's very evident," retorted Dora. "I should have no right to exist, in his opinion, were it not for my good luck in being my father's daughter. I believe he would like to shut me up in some cleft of the rocks, and, when

ever I laugh, he looks as if he would like to annihilate me at once."

The last assertion did not seem wholly unfounded, for the professor, who was now returning, certainly frowned very angrily as the girl's gay laugh fell upon his ears. He was apparently a man of forty, yet he looked much older, and the lines on the high forehead, the stern expression about the lips, were not specially attractive. But what lent him an almost repulsive appearance was the shock of thick black hair bristling unkempt around his head like a mane. His figure was well proportioned and, spite of his severe intellectual toil, his physical health seemed perfect.

"I think it is time to start," he said, curtly.
"So you mean to stay here, Herr Herwig?"

"Yes, I'll stay and chat with Sepp."

"I wish you joy in your study of folk lore. Only pray don't expect me to share it," said Normann, with his usual want of tact. "Come, Friedel, take the baggage. Are you ready, Fräulein Dora?"

Dora said good-by to her father, while Friedel took up a heavy satchel, the professor's umbrella and several other things; then the three crossed the pasture land and entered the woods which concealed them from those who remained behind.

The path ran but a short distance under the

shady rustling pines, then rose in numerous steep curves, and the sun beat down more and more fiercely. The ascent was toilsome, but the young girl did not seem to feel it. She moved with a light, firm step, and her brown eyes sparkled more brightly and joyously as the view grew wider. Her companion, too, showed no trace of fatigue, but the unusual exercise heated him and he suddenly stopped.

"There Friedel, take my shawl," he said. Then noticing that Friedel was not behind him, added : "My ! what has become of the boy ? I believe he can't keep up with us. He's creeping along below like a snail."

Dora had also paused and glanced back.

"You ought to have left him with papa. It's so hard for him to carry that heavy bag. Besides, the path is too steep for him."

"Left him down there ?" replied Normann "Do you suppose I brought the boy for *his* pleasure ? No, he's to carry the baggage for me. I've no inclination to drag the things about in this heat."

"But he is a city boy, and cannot stand climbing mountains."

"Then he must learn to do so. A boy fourteen years old and can't climb ! There he comes at last, but how slowly he drags along. Hurry, Friedel !"

Friedel, who had really dropped some dis-

tance behind, slowly approached. The perspiration stood in big drops on his forehead, but spite of the heat and exertion, his face was deadly pale and his narrow chest heaved with his panting breath. Yet he obediently held out his hand and took the shawl which his employer flung to him.

But Dora was not disposed to let the poor boy be so overloaded.

"Sit down, Friedel, and rest," she said very authoritatively. "You can't go any farther now. Give me the shawl. I'll relieve you of the thick cloth, if it is too heavy for the professor."

She actually proceeded to put her words into action, but the professor now seemed dimly to perceive that this was not exactly the proper thing. Muttering a few unintelligible words, he snatched the shawl from the hand of the exhausted boy and flung it over his own shoulder; but at the same time cast a wrathful look at the young lady who had administered the covert, yet perfectly palpable, reproof.

"Very well, rest then;" he growled. "You can't miss the way. Follow us later, if there's nothing else to be done."

The permission was given in the harshest tone. Friedel silently accepted it, but the way in which he dropped down on a stone showed that he really could go no farther, while Normann, who evidently did not comprehend how anybody could be tired by such "a little climb,"

stretched his strong limbs and strode vigorously forward. Perceiving that his companion cast an anxious glance back from time to time, he asked, jeeringly:

"Have you taken Friedel into your inmost heart?"

"At least I pity him; it is hard for the poor boy."

"Hard? Why, I should think he fared as well as any youngster in his situation could."

"Do you consider it a piece of good fortune to be an orphan and compelled to live with strangers?"

"Indeed! *Is* the lad an orphan?" asked the professor with a touch of surprise.

Dora looked at him in astonishment. "Don't you know that? Yet he told me that you had known him for two years."

"Known him? My! yes. I know that he lives in a house at the rear of mine: That he comes every day to black my boots, and on account of his being so still and quiet I took him to wait upon me. My old housekeeper chatters all day long; her tongue goes like a mill from morning until night, so I never let her come into my study. Friedel never opens his lips unless I speak to him, so I engaged him."

"Yes, I noticed that Trappist training," replied the young girl with a touch of sarcasm. "At first I had trouble enough to make him speak as

he stood beside me, so sad and silent, watching while I painted. He is happy if he is merely allowed to look on, and yet his timid remarks often show remarkable appreciation of art."

"Appreciation of art?" Normann shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "It's nothing but the charm of novelty which the bright colors possess for that boy, because he sees nothing of the kind at home or in my house. Unluckily, he seems spell-bound by your easel. Whenever I want him, he is over in your garden and he appears to have told you his whole life-history. Why not, if it amuses you? But I have something else to do than to talk with my boot-black."

The scornful tone probably irritated the young girl even more than the words themselves. Her voice, usually so gentle, was unusually sharp as she replied:

"That would be expecting far too much from you. But my father, who is also a scholar, has often told me that we can seek and find in every human being the Prometheus spark concealed within his breast. All we require is a little heart and philanthropy—true, everybody does not possess them."

"Aha, that is aimed at me," cried Normann, indignantly. "I suppose you consider me a heartless monster?"

Dora's glance rested on him for an instant. Then, with unconcealed derision, she replied :

"If that is the name you give yourself. I should have expressed it less bluntly."

This reply infuriated the professor. He again found himself utterly defrauded of the respect due to his years and his scientific attainments. He actually disliked this Dora Herwig. The pert girl of twenty had not the least respect for the professor, but treated him precisely as if they stood on the same footing ; contradicted him at every opportunity, and sometimes actually presumed to reprove him, and he could not even snub her, at least not so harshly as he desired, because she was the daughter of a colleague whom he respected, and to whom a certain degree of consideration was due. Normann had never been so much irritated as during this stay in Schlehdorf, where he had expected to pursue his studies wholly undisturbed, and where he was now entirely upset by this brown-eyed, fair-haired disturber of his peace. How often he had resolved to give up his talks with Herr Herwig on subjects of mutual scientific interest, rather than let day after day drag on in this fashion ; but as soon as Herwig and his daughter set off on a mountain ramble he always joined them, only to be vexed anew.

Poor Friedel, of course, suffered most from his master's ill humor, and was now again to serve

as lightening conductor for the tempest the young lady's last remark had conjured up.

The lad had rested only about ten minutes and then set off again. They saw how he was hurrying to overtake them. Suddenly he turned into a narrow, very steep path in the rocks, which cut off a wide curve. This movement vexed the professor.

"What possessed the boy to climb up there?" he growled. "It's only fit for the goats and shepherd lads. Friedel! He doesn't hear. Well, if you're such a blockhead I don't care—"

"Friedel, don't come that way!" called Dora, waving him back, but the boy either did not understand or was afraid to return, for the path along which he had advanced some distance was merely a ridge of rock. So he still climbed upward.

"He really isn't a bad mountaineer," said Normann, who stood watching him. "He doesn't seem at all giddy. It requires courage to try too steep a path. I couldn't have expected it from such a dunce."

"Friedel is no dunce," said Dora, quietly. "He is only shy, which is natural for a poor, sickly child, reared by harsh foster-parents. I certainly would not permit it, if I only had him with us in Heidelberg."

"It would be doing the human race a fine service to preserve so sickly a plant," said the

professor, without noticing the reproof contained in her last words.

"Oh, professor!" The exclamation was full of wrath and horror, but Normann carelessly continued:

"My! yes. Is it any boon to mankind if a frail existence, which is not suited to the world's work, is prolonged for a few years? Just look at the boy. He is a candidate for consumption. He'll never be able to do the work to which fate assigns him. He'll simply drag out a pitiful existence, a burden to himself and others, and at last die an early death. Surely the sooner it comes the better. Yes, Fräulein Dora, you needn't look at me so indignantly. I am perfectly serious. You, of course, view matters from the standpoint of what is termed philanthropy, which is all very pretty and pleasant, but unhappily not always sensible. There is a higher standpoint, which does not deal with fine feelings and forms of speech, but draws sensible conclusions. True, it is not meant for women, who will never attain to—"

"No, they never will—thank heaven!" Dora interrupted. Her face was deeply flushed and her eyes blazed with a passionate light. "Thank heaven!" she repeated, still more vehemently. "For a woman who would quietly look on and see a poor child, whom she perhaps might help, perish before her eyes, because she draws sensi-

ble conclusions and occupies a higher standpoint than ‘what is termed philanthropy,’ would deserve—a husband like yourself.”

Professor Normann was at first fairly rigid with amazement at this attack. Hitherto he had been accustomed to distribute incivilities, and now he was obliged to receive one, and from the rosy lips of a young girl. It really extorted a certain feeling of respect, though it affected him so unpleasantly. And the girl looked so pretty, too, with her crimson cheeks and flashing eyes—it was enough to drive him distracted.

“So that is the worst thing you could wish a woman—to have me for her husband?” he exclaimed at last. “Not very flattering, but don’t fear, Fräulein, *that* misfortune will befall none of your sex. Think me a monster if you choose. I repeat, I don’t believe in what is called philanthropy. As the world and life are now constituted, we can find use for sound, vigorous men only, no weaklings who must be carefully coddled and then can accomplish nothing. It is better for those who do not possess much vitality not to live at all. This is the lesson taught by nature, science, reason. We see it—”

He paused, for a low cry of terror, followed by a shriek from Dora, interrupted the explanation. Friedel had already passed the greater portion of the dangerous path and was just setting his foot on a stone, when it rolled from

under it—the boy struggled, fell, and rolled down the steep mountain-side. Once he clung to a bush growing in a crevice, which perhaps might have supported the lad's frail figure, but the heavy satchel had crushed the slender stem and dragged him down. For a moment he hung on the edge of the cliff, then the bush gave way and he disappeared.

Dora Herwig was a brave, resolute girl. For an instant she stood rigid with horror at the catastrophe which had happened before her eyes, but she spent no time in useless cries and exclamations of terror. Seizing her alpen-stock, she began to return as swiftly as possible. She did not even glance at her companion, for she expected no aid from him. Suddenly an unlooked-for spectacle made her pause.

Professor Normann whizzed past her on the same rocky path which he had just called dangerous and which had become so fatal to poor Friedel. Of course the descent was far more perilous than the ascent had been, especially when made in so venturesome a fashion as the professor's. He leaped, slid, slipped, hap-hazard, as if it were a matter of life and death, and also vanished from the girl's eyes over the brink of the precipice.

When Dora, panting for breath, at last reached the bottom of the cliff and looked for the boy, she saw that her worst fear was not

confirmed. Friedel had not fallen into the chasm, but was lying just on the verge. A few feet more, and the abyss would have received his shattered body, but even now the case was sufficiently serious. The lad lay perfectly motionless and deadly pale, with blood trickling from his forehead, while the professor was clumsily trying to restore him to consciousness.

"I think he is dead," he said in a strangely husky tone.

"Draw him farther away from the edge," cried Dora, quickly. "He is lying so near it that his first movement might cause another fall."

Normann obeyed. Lifting the boy, he carried him several yards away, then stood gazing at him in silence.

Hitherto he had seen in the little fellow only the servant who regularly and noiselessly performed his accustomed tasks, and suited him because he did not interrupt him in his work, and now a bleeding child lay before him with closed eyes and an expression of suffering distinctly imprinted on the pallid little face. This was an experience wholly new to him. He gazed with a sort of helpless perplexity at his young companion who exclaimed :

"There! give me your satchel. We will try to pour a few drops of wine down his throat, or at least rub his temples with it. Put the shawl

under his head. Perhaps he is only stunned by the fall."

Kneeling, she tried to stanch the blood with her handkerchief; the professor drew out his too, but he had probably never offered any one assistance, he was so clumsy in his movements. First he poured half the contents of his flask over the senseless boy, and, when this did not avail, seized him by the shoulders and began to shake him roughly at the same time calling him by name in tones of mingled anxiety and anger. Dora was about to interfere indignantly, but this strange treatment proved successful. Friedel stirred slightly and opened his eyes.

Recognizing the young lady, he tried to smile and touched his bleeding forehead with his hand.

"Keep quiet, Friedel," said Dora. "Don't move yet. Does it hurt much?" While speaking, she threw her own blood-stained handkerchief aside and, taking the professor's, made a bandage.

"I don't know," Friedel answered, faintly. "It bleeds—I suppose I fell."

"Of course!" cried Normann, instantly, concealing his intense relief under apparent harshness. "You went down the cliff heels over head, and we were obliged to climb down after you."

"I really couldn't help it," said Friedel, apologetically, "the stone turned and the satchel—"

"You were awkward," retorted the professor,

yet he gave the satchel, which laid near, an angry kick. Then he suddenly lifted the boy and set him on his feet.

"Can you stand? Lift your arm! Well, at least no bones are broken, and the hole in your head will heal. There! he is fainting again. What a weak creature!"

He caught the sinking form in time and laid the boy on the ground again. But Dora now interposed and positively forbade this treatment.

"Leave Friedel to me," she said in an irritated tone. "Your would-be remedies are worse than the plunge from the cliff. At least have the kindness to go down the mountain and get a couple of men to carry the poor boy, for I hope you see that he cannot walk."

Normann looked down at the lad who, under Dora's ministrations, revived in a few minutes, and shook his head ungraciously.

"So that he may get a sunstroke into the bargain," he muttered. "There isn't a bit of shade near, and it will be an hour before any one can get here—I'll carry him myself."

Dora gazed at him in mute amazement. It was certainly best to get the boy down the mountain side to some place where he could obtain assistance as quickly as possible, yet it seemed very strange that Professor Normann should offer to do the work himself. The latter, without waiting for her reply, raised the boy a

second time, but the rebuke he had received seemed to have produced an effect, for the movement with which he again lifted him in his arms was very gentle and cautious, while he said authoritatively.

"Put your head on my shoulder and don't move—there! Now you can faint a third time, if it's any satisfaction to you."

Holding Friedel in his arms, he began to follow the homeward path, accompanied by Dora. The boy's fragile figure was no heavy burden, yet it became very perceptible on the steep shadeless mountain path, beneath a scorching sun, especially to the professor, who was not accustomed to carry anything. He now panted for breath, the perspiration streamed from his forehead. True, he strode on, but this first act in the service of what is termed "philanthropy" was a very hard task.

Professor Herwig's home in Schlehdorf was an unpretending one, as would be expected in a little mountain village, and many of the usual conveniences were lacking, but the cottage was neat and pleasant, and moreover afforded an extensive view of the mountains. A small garden divided it from the adjoining house, where Professor Normann lived, and of course there was daily intercourse between the two neighbors.

The gentlemen were sitting in the large room on the ground floor occupied by Herr Herwig, and had become so absorbed in their conversation that they noticed neither the beautiful sunset, nor the song whose notes floated in through the open window. Dora sat outside in the arbor, trying to teach Friedel some melodies. He seemed to be a docile pupil, for he repeated the tune, in a feeble but clear voice, catching the air very quickly.

"As I tell you," Herwig was just saying at the close of a long conversation, "Professor Welten is going to Vienna early next spring. The arrangements are not yet completed but he will undoubtedly accept. I know from the most reliable sources that you would gladly be secured as a member of the faculty of our University, only you have hitherto had a decided aversion to any extension of your tasks as teacher, and would accept no position of this sort."

"Yes—hitherto!" replied Normann with a touch of embarrassment, which, however, wholly escaped the notice of his companion, who eagerly continued :

"I hope you have changed your opinion. Believe me, an inspiring influence emanates from the professor's chair, and we need a younger, more vigorous strength, if Welten leaves us. Only I have doubted whether you would accept any invitation, for—does the singing disturb you?"

Dora ought to have chosen another place ! We'll shut the window."

He moved toward it, for he had noticed that Normann, instead of listening to his words, was gazing intently out of it. But Normann rushed in front of him.

"My ! I really don't hear it—and the room is very warm."

"Well, as you choose," Herwig answered, "as to our Heidelberg, you are sufficiently familiar with its academical affairs. The society is very pleasant and the beautiful situation of the place is also to be considered in thinking of a possible removal."

"I never go into society," said Normann, with his usual bluntness, "and I care nothing about the situation. You know I have no taste for landscapes."

"Yes, I know it, and have given up trying to convert you—but what does Dora mean ? Just listen ; the saucy girl has overheard your last words, and is making fun of you!"

Dora had really stopped midway in a song and commenced an entirely different tune. She had a pretty voice, which echoed very sweetly through the stillness of the evening :

"Old Heidelberg, so dear, so fair
City with honors crowned,
No other can with thee compare,
On Rhine or Neckar found."

At the second verse Friedel chimed in, though somewhat timidly, but he soon caught the tune and sang the third verse clearly and steadily.

"Yes, Fräulein Dora seems to seek every opportunity of turning me into ridicule," answered Normann, sullenly. "She has taken entire possession of Friedel and acts as if he were her exclusive property. I scarcely see the boy. Now she is teaching him to sing because she knows I can't endure it. But heaven preserve him if he attempts to sing to me!"

Yet, spite of his wrath, the professor still stood at the window to thoroughly enjoy the annoyance caused him.

Herr Herwig showed some little embarrassment, for the complaint was not wholly unfounded. Dora now stood on a war footing with his colleague, and could not be induced to show him a proper degree of respect. Her father's remonstrances produced no effect, and he shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"You must overlook her sauciness. I confess that my daughter is somewhat spoiled and self-willed. She lost her mother when a mere child, and knows only too well that she holds the first place in her father's house and heart. She is spoiled in society, too. The students vie with one another in showing her attention, and so do the younger tutors, many of them with serious intentions. Such things make a young girl fancy she

can jest with everybody, and she sometimes forgets what is due to a man of your years and importance."

But the well-meant apology did not have the desired effect. Professor Normann made a wry face as if he tasted something bitter.

"Of my years?" he repeated, slowly. "How old do you think I am?"

"About forty-five."

"Pardon me, I'm just thirty-nine."

"Well, don't be vexed," replied Herwig laughing. "You really look older. But you needn't mind that. You are classed among the younger men in science."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the housekeeper, who came in to say that the man who was to drive the professor and his daughter to the station the next morning, had come to ask about the hour of starting and the luggage.

"I must speak to him myself," said Herwig, rising. "We will see each other again before we part, my dear Normann. You'll be glad to get rid of your noisy neighbors."

Normann was uncivil enough not to contradict him, but he did not look particularly delighted as he also rose and left the room. On the contrary, he seemed to be in a very bad humor, though the much-desired quiet was now assured.

Dora was sitting in the arbor, arranging the sketches and drawings collected during her stay

in Schlehdorf, which must now be packed. Among them were some landscapes in water-colors and several heads, and though there was no evidence of great genius, her work showed a considerable degree of talent.

Friedel was putting the sheets into a portfolio and fairly devouring them with his eyes. A wide fresh scar on his forehead still remained to bear witness to the fall over the cliff, but in other respects he had changed greatly during the last four weeks. His bearing was more erect and vigorous, his complexion had become fresher and, instead of his former sickly pallor, a faint color tinged his cheeks. The dark circles around his eyes had disappeared, and his shy, diffident manner had also vanished. He no longer wore the shabby out-grown garments which he had brought with him, but a brand-new suit, and the jacket with green cuffs and the little mountaineer's hat were very becoming; it was evident that Friedel was a very pretty boy. The poor stunted city child, who had been permitted for the first time to breathe the free air of the mountains, to have a taste of joy and liberty, had developed wonderfully under the influence of these powerful remedies.

The gay conversation which Dora was carrying on with her protégé was interrupted by the professor, who burst in upon their chat like a thunder storm.

"Have you forgotten that it's seven o'clock?" he said, angrily. "You must drink your milk. It is to be taken regularly. I brought the boy to the mountains on account of the doctor's urgent entreaties that he might look like a human being, and now he stands staring at pictures instead of drinking his milk, and of course will go home just as puny in appearance as before. Go to the barn at once."

Dora had listened in astonishment. "Why, Professor Normann," she cried, "that sounds almost like the foolish philanthropy which you condemned so bitterly a short time ago. Go, Friedel," she continued. "I can finish alone. Take my hat with you into the house."

The boy cast a sorrowful glance at the sketches, which he would have liked to see once more, took the hat—it was the little straw one with the blue vail which Dora always wore in her mountain rambles—and went off with it. The young girl gazed after him, and then asked:

"Don't you think Friedel has gained wonderfully during the last four weeks?"

"I don't see anything wonderful about it," replied Normann. "The boy is petted and pampered and spoiled like a prince. I've even been obliged to buy him a suit of new clothes, which cost a pile of money."

"But he looks so well in them! Besides, I

only asked modestly for a jacket, and you bought the whole suit and the most expensive material into the bargain."

"Because I was ashamed to have the boy running about with us all day long in his rags. You take him everywhere, there's no doing without him, though he merely carries your sketching portfolio, because he must not be allowed to exert himself. *I* am obliged to tug my own luggage. I'm not even asked about the matter. The boy and I are both under perfect tyranny."

"But Friedel is very comfortable under this tyranny," said Dora, quietly, "and so are you, Herr Professor."

"Pardon me, I'm very badly off, for the boy is utterly useless. I had trained him to suit me exactly. He did not venture to open his lips in my room—now he chatters constantly, and is even beginning to grumble. On every occasion I hear: Fräulein Dora doesn't like that, Fräulein Dora wants this so and so, and of course he does what the young lady desires, and cares not a straw for me or my orders."

"Yes, why do you allow it?" asked Dora. "I wouldn't if I were you!" With these words she took her sunshade from the bench and rested it against the wooden lattice work.

"Oh, why do I allow it?" repeated Normann in great wrath, hurriedly occupying the vacant

place on the bench. "You don't care for my objections."

"No, and I won't have Friedel turned into a machine again. What do you mean to do with him when you go back to the city?"

"He shall black my boots," said the professor with grim satisfaction. "Or do you suppose I mean to coddle him as you do? He isn't consumptive, only puny. The doctor tells me all he needs is air, exercise and nourishing food. Well, he has them now, and if he gets well so much the better for him. But his idle life will be over; he must black boots again from morning till night."

"Have you such an endless number of boots?" cried the young girl bursting into a shout of laughter which fairly drove the professor to despair.

"Don't laugh, Fräulein Dora," he said, angrily. "I must beg you not to laugh at me. I—"

"Am Professor Julius Normann, the light of science, who owns so many boots that it keeps some one blacking them from morning till night," cried Dora laughing till the tears filled her eyes. "That would surely be beyond poor Friedel's strength, and besides I had another proposal to make."

"Is the lad to be an opera singer?" asked Normann, spitefully. "Or am I to have him educated that he also may become a light of science?"

"Not exactly, but something similar. Look at this—Friedel's first drawing."

Dora drew a sheet of paper from the portfolio and handed it to the professor, who took it very suspiciously. He had scarcely glanced at it ere he flew into a furious rage.

"The miserable scoundrel! So this his gratitude. He draws me as a scarecrow. Well, just let him wait till he gets into my hands."

The young lady's lips twitched again, but this time she controlled her mirth.

"Ah, so you recognize the picture?"

"Certainly. It is a speaking likeness. But Friedel never made it alone. You helped him."

"I did not draw a single line. He did it secretly, and was unwilling to give me the sketch when I surprised him. That's the way you look in a bad humor, and you are nearly always in one."

This was too much for the professor; he started up.

"What? That's the way I look? Am I a scarecrow with which children are frightened to bed? Have I such a nose—such a shock of hair?"

"The nose is certainly rather large, but the forehead and eyes are admirably done, and as for the hair—do you never look in the glass, professor?"

"No," roared Normann, who was becoming

more and more excited the longer he looked at the picture, which really was not flattering.

"Well then, look at yourself to-morrow and do Friedel justice. As to your shock of hair—pardon me, those are your own words—he really did not exaggerate, it is true to nature."

"Shall I have it cut off and go about like a convict?"

"No, you need only use a little pomade on it, perhaps you would then look more human."

The professor ran both hands through his hair.

"So I look like a monster? A monster! Is that what you mean, Fräulein Dora?"

"Not like a human being," replied Dora, coolly, "and now give me back the picture."

"I'll first box the boy's ears with it," Normann retorted, but the young lady prevented this amiable intention by quietly taking the sketch from him and putting it into the portfolio.

"Excuse me. I intend to carry it to Heidelberg and show it to my teacher, who is one of our most distinguished artists. I know in advance what he will say. "If the boy has drawn that without any instruction, without the least assistance, he certainly possesses God-given talent which must be cultivated."

"Oh, so that's it," cried the professor, on whose mind light was now dawning. "You

want to make the boy an artist, because he can scrawl a little with a pencil and has turned me into a scarecrow! No doubt you consider it very romantic to discover such a God-given talent in rags, and give the world a second Raphael. Young ladies always have these fancies. It is so touching, so philanthropic, so sublime. Deuce take all the fine feelings which work so much mischief in the world. I, you know—”

“Yes, you, of course, occupy a higher standpoint,” Dora interrupted. “You care nothing for what is termed philanthropy.”

“And therefore I won’t allow the boy’s head to be filled with notions,” retorted Normann, who was greatly irritated by the sarcasm. “I suppose he it to have drawing-lessons, imagine that he is to be a great artist, become accustomed to an idle life, and at last it will all come to nothing, his so-called genius will leave him in the lurch and he’ll be obliged to turn house painter. Then he will really be miserable; for it’s much easier to get notions into the head than to drive them out again. No, Fräulein, that won’t do. I suppose you call it philanthropy, to take such a lad out of his sphere in life and fling him haphazard into another, but I tell you it will be a misfortune to him, and this time I shall plant myself on the higher standpoint very positively.”

But the professor’s resolve did him little

service. Dora closed the portfolio, and said as calmly as if she had met with the most cordial assent:

"My opinion, of course, is not decisive, but if my teacher confirms my judgment, something must be done for Friedel. Unfortunately, my father is not rich enough to make such sacrifices. You have property, so you are the person to do it."

"I?" cried Normann, fairly petrified with amazement at this reply to his impulsive declaration. "So, because my colleague Herwig cannot commit an act of folly, I must? That is a matter of course! But you are mistaken there, Fräulein. Friedel is a day-laborer's child, and must fight his way through the world like the rest of his class. He shall stick to his boot-blacking—so that ends the matter."

He flung himself back on the bench with an audible thump, to add emphasis to his words, and thought he had settled the whole business with his "that ends the matter," but he undervalued his young antagonist who suddenly dropped the subject and asked abruptly:

"Have you a garden attached to your house, Professor Normann?"

"I? No, I live in the heart of the city," he replied, surprised by the question.

"We have a beautiful large garden in Heidelberg. It is on the slope of a hill and affords a

wide view of the valley of the Neckar. Last winter was very severe, and the cold destroyed many of our flowers and shrubs. They were lying uprooted in a heap, ready to be carried away, when I came down one morning. Amid the tangle of dry branches I saw a few puny green leaves. It was a little rose-bush peering from the heap of boughs where it was thrown to die. I pulled it out and carried it to our old gardener, who planted it again though he laughed at me and said it had been frozen and would never bloom ; it would be better for me to throw it on the rubbish heap. But I pitied the poor plant, which had tried so hard to put forth a few green leaves in the first spring sunshine, and must now wither and die while all its companions were growing so gaily. So I set it myself in the sunniest spot and watered it every day. For weeks it drooped and did not thrive, but suddenly it began to flourish and in the blossoming time was covered with roses."

The young girl's voice, usually so clear and ringing, sounded subdued and gentle, and her clear brown eyes were fixed with a strangely earnest expression upon the professor, who did not utter a syllable, but gazed intently at her. After a pause of several minutes, Dora softly continued :

"When I see how Friedel's pretty blue eyes sparkle whenever he sees or hears anything

about art, I cannot help thinking of my little bush with its first stunted growth, and its magnificent display of roses."

Another pause followed, then Normann said in a strangely altered voice:

"Hum! I'll consider the matter."

Dora rose and took her portfolio.

"Pray do so, professor. I have received to-day a very, very fierce 'that ends it.' I shall expect to-morrow an equally positive 'yes' to take with me on my journey—good night."

Again the gay, saucy laugh rang out to which, though it had so often exasperated the professor, he listened as if it were music; then the young girl hurried off and vanished in the house.

Normann sat motionless a few minutes, then thrust both hands through his hair, usually his favorite gesture, but this time it seemed to make him a little uncomfortable.

"Do I really look as that confounded boy represented me?" he muttered. "And by way of gratitude, I'm to have him educated. How she told the story of the rose-bush! One would fain have seized the girl and"—here he paused, horrified by the thought which had suddenly entered his mind.

But annoying thoughts have the evil quality of pertinaciously returning, and so it was with the poor professor. He could not shake it off

until he at last worked himself into an actual rage.

"Nonsense! When I go to Heidelberg in the spring I shall find her betrothed. Perhaps I may be permitted to witness the ceremony and offer my most sincere congratulations. 'The students all pay her attention and so do the younger tutors, many of them with serious intentions'—I should like to wring the necks of the whole crew!" he added angrily, with a corresponding gesture which made Friedel who had just entered the arbor start back in alarm.

"Herr Professor—?"

"Well, I wasn't thinking of you; you needn't be so frightened," growled his master.

"I don't feel frightened any more," replied Friedel, simply, but the answer irritated his employer.

"Oh, so you no longer have any respect for me and tell me of it to my face? The fellow isn't afraid any more. We'll see. Come here, Friedel."

The lad obeyed, but his blue eyes rested fearlessly on the professor who fully intended to lecture him severely about the picture. Suddenly, however, the story of the rose-bush came back to his memory and the reproof was transformed to a simple order.

"Friedel, Professor Herwig and his daughter are going to-morrow, get me at once—"

"A bouquet of flowers!" cried Friedel, eagerly.

"Nonsense! What should I do with a bouquet of flowers?" replied Normann, angrily. "Must your tongue run perpetually? Buy me a bottle of hair oil."

"Hair—oil?" repeated Friedel, utterly amazed.

"Why, yes. Or can't you buy such things in this out-of-the-way place?"

"I think the grocer sells it."

"Then go to the grocer."

Friedel could not yet quite understand this incomprehensible order.

"Shall I get a large or a small bottle?" he asked at last.

"The largest you can find, and now be off. Stop. What is that you have in your jacket?"

The boy flushed crimson and hastily put his hand on his pocket, from which peeped some blue object which he hurriedly tried to conceal, but the professor noticed his intention and prevented him.

"What does this mean? That is the vail from Fräulein Dora's traveling hat, which you just took to the house. What are you doing with it?"

The question confused the boy still more, his eyes drooped guiltily and he stammered:

"The young lady is going to-morrow, so I thought—I wanted—"

"What did you want?" persisted Normann,

obstinately, and Friedel now suddenly gained courage and began to talk freely.

"Fräulein Dora has been so kind to me, and she told me she would not forget me in Heidelberg, but Heidelberg is so far off, and she surely won't remember. So I thought of what Sepp told us that day in the mountain pasture about the hunter who stole the vail. Sepp says it is just as true now, people need only try it, but the vail must be stolen and so—I stole it."

"Oh, you silly boy!" cried the professor wrathfully. "You, city-born, to believe such nonsensical rubbish! But that's the way with you all! You won't listen to reason; but if anybody comes with the most absurd superstition you swallow it at once. It is perfectly useless to try to lift you to any higher standpoint; you cling to your folly. Go and return Fräulien Dora's vail instantly—or no, I'll do it myself and tell her how foolishly you have behaved."

Friedel hung his head at the rebuke, then cast a mournful glance at the tissue to which he attributed such magical powers, and slipped away in confusion.

The sun had set long before, and now even the last glow of sunset was fading. Twilight closed in, shrouding the landscape with its cool gray shadows. Then the moon rose slowly above the mountains and the stillness of evening rested on the earth.

Professor Normann still sat in the arbor, chafing against the gross superstition of people in general, and Friedel, in particular, but he continued to hold the vail in his hand.

Of course old Sepp had talked arrant nonsense that day on the mountain. Normann even distinctly recalled the words : "It will come true now just the same. If a youth has a sweetheart, he must steal her vail—a kerchief will do, too, if she's a mountain maiden—then she'll never forget him. Day and night her thoughts will dwell with him, she can't shut him out of her mind—but the vail must be stolen."

That foolish Friedel! As if such stories were fit for a boy of fourteen. What should he know about sweethearts?

The professor still gazed intently at the airy tissue in his hand. He had so often seen it fluttering around the brown braids and the rosy face: Now all those pleasant hours were over. To-morrow he would not hear the gay, saucy laugh, nor see the bright face. Now the pleasant life in the hospitable Herwig mansion would begin again. All the students and younger tutors would come to pay court to the daughter of the house. Winter with its balls and entertainments would follow—of course the summer trip, with everything connected with it, would be forgotten —of course it would.

The moon now cast its rays through the

leafy roof of the arbor—the moon alone witnessed Professor Julius Normann, the light of science, the distinguished free-thinker, fall lower and lower from his higher standpoint down to the much disdained gross superstition. And then came a moment when the moon really ought to have hidden her face in order not to see what happened. The aforesaid professor glanced timidly around, carefully folded the blue vail and hid it in his breast pocket. He was far more ashamed of himself than Friedel had been. Nevertheless he pressed his hand closely on his breast to guard his talisman. He would not have resigned it for any money in the world.

* * * * *

The next day dawned clear and bright. The chain of mountain peaks stood forth in vivid outlines, and the dew in the garden sparkled brightly in the morning sunlight. It was superb weather for traveling.

The occupants of the house where Professor Herwig lived with his daughter were busied in the final preparations for the journey. No one appeared at door or window, but a tall figure was pacing slowly to and fro in the garden. It was not Professor Normann's usual custom to move with so much deliberation and dignity. On the contrary he was generally hasty and abrupt in his movements, but this demeanor seemed to him to

be a point of honor to correspond with the change which had taken place in his outer man.

He had actually accomplished the amazing feat of smoothing his "shock of hair," only Normann, who was entirely unacquainted with the use of pomade, had unluckily applied it too freely. The oil glittered on his head like the dew on the bushes; the locks which usually bristled so stiffly now lay smoothly across his brow and were fairly plastered on his temples.

The professor was altered almost beyond recognition, and his appearance had undeniably lost much of its fierceness; but he felt very uncomfortable in his brand-new "respectability."

Friedel, too, was in the garden, carrying a huge bouquet of flowers. He knew what to do with flowers when a young lady was going away, far better than his master, and had ransacked their landlady's little garden for them. His appearance was changed also. When the professor had used nearly the whole bottle of oil to smooth his hair, Friedel had asked and obtained permission to beautify himself with the remainder. So his fair locks shone, too, though to a somewhat less degree, and he imagined himself wonderfully improved by it.

The door of the house opened and Dora, dressed for her journey, appeared. She nodded pleasantly to her protégé, whom she saw first, and was just answering his morning greeting

when Professor Normann appeared before her and said, with a touch of solemnity in his tone:

“Good-morning, Fräulein Dora.”

Dora turned, glanced at him, stood for a moment rigid with astonishment, and then burst into a perfect convulsion of laughter.

“Well, Fräulein!” Normann drew himself up, deeply insulted. He had expected his appearance to produce a very different effect.

“Excuse me, Professor”—the young lady strove in vain to control her mirth—“I certainly did not mean—but—oh, this is too good a joke!” And her laughter almost stifled her.

“Do not laugh at me again, Fräulein Dora!” exclaimed the professor in an almost threatening tone, and, according to his custom, was about to run both hands through his hair, but recollecting just in time that this would not suit its present arrangement, and clenched them convulsively, then continued in an almost plaintive tone :

“You advised hair-oil. I’ve used nearly a whole bottle of it and Friedel has taken the rest.”

“Yes, he looks like a simpleton,” replied Dora, giving herself up once more to her mirth.

This was indeed an insult, but a strange gentleness of mood seemed to have taken possession of the professor with his anointing, for instead of flying into a rage, he said in a tone of the deepest reproach :

"You laugh at me—and I did it solely for your sake."

"For my sake!" Dora suddenly grew very grave, her eyes met his, then she held out her hand, saying softly:

"Then I will not laugh any longer."

Meanwhile, Friedel had taken the bouquet he intended to give her into the arbor and wondered why the professor clasped the little hand that lay in his so long. But the latter appeared to be in a very amiable mood that morning, for he began to pace up and down with the young lady, absorbed in eager conversation. The boy's heart beat violently. Surely they must be talking about the vail—would Fräulein Dora be angry?

But neither the vail nor Friedel was mentioned in the conversation, for Dora was just saying in reply to a remark of her companion:

"Papa thinks your coming to Heidelberg will depend solely upon your own wishes, and he will be very glad if you decide to do so."

"Yes, *he*," replied Normann in a somewhat unsteady voice, "but others would not—you, for instance, would not be pleased?"

"Oh yes, if you bring Friedel with you."

"That silly boy again!" cried the professor, angrily. "He is the only person for whom you care."

"I am deeply interested in his future. Have you considered the matter?"

"What matter?"

"Why, I showed you yesterday the picture which you thought so unflattering, yet it is so admirable in every line. True, there is less resemblance now."

The young lady's lips twitched treacherously as she glanced at her companion's well-oiled locks; but the allusion to the picture seemed to have put the latter into a very ungracious mood. His former morose expression returned as he replied:

"I have no intention of putting these notions of art into the youngster's head. He has grown pert enough already, let him stick to his boot-blacking. You needn't say anything more about it, Fräulein. I've made up my mind."

"Positively!" said Dora completing the sentence. "Must I tell you once more, Professor, what you will do when you get to the city?"

"Do you know?"

"Perfectly. You will go to an artist of repute as quickly as possible and obtain his opinion of Friedel's talent. Then you will take him to a drawing school, provide him most liberally with everything he needs, and inform me, with your usual brusqueness, that the matter is arranged, it is no farther concern of mine, and I need not trouble myself about it. What do you think of my clairvoyance?"

Normann made no answer. It really did seem

to border on clairvoyance to have her tell him his most secret thoughts and intentions. He was fairly bewildered.

"Don't try to deny it," Dora went on triumphantly. "When we were climbing the mountain from the pasture that day, you explained to me very fully that it would be much better and more profitable for humanity to have that puny plant, Friedel, die as soon as possible, and then you carried him for an hour in the scorching sunshine to secure help as soon as possible. When he was brought to Schlehdorf, and I wanted to nurse him, you rudely declared that you could attend to him yourself. You sat all night by his bedside applying bandages. Now you obstinately insist on the bootblacking, and, as soon as my back is turned, a pencil will be put into Friedel's hand. Don't look so fierce, professor! I don't believe another word you say. You have deceived me with your pretended heartlessness."

Normann had really made an effort to maintain his former morose manner, but he did not succeed. He realized this fact himself, and suddenly bending toward her, he said in a low tone:

"Fräulein Dora, will you think of me sometimes?"

The manner was so earnest that she could not give a careless reply. Her eyes drooped.

"Am I to think that you will come to Heidelberg?"

"Next spring, perhaps. But long before that time you will doubtless have forgotten me."

"No," said the young girl in a low, but firm tone, slowly raising her beautiful brown eyes, which gazed deep into the questioner's, and he must have believed their assurance, for his hand suddenly grasped hers with a passionate clasp.

Just at that moment the door opened and Professor Herwig appeared. He, too, noticed with the utmost surprise his colleague's well-oiled locks, but knowing his sensitiveness, he made no comment but shook hands with him, while Dora went into the house to get her hat and gloves. Directly after, her voice was heard saying:

"If I only knew where my vail was! It was wound around my hat, and now I can't find it anywhere!"

Friedel, who had come forward with his bouquet, flushed crimson and glanced timidly at his employer. Surely the latter would now give her the missing vail, which he had probably forgotten, but strangely enough, this did not happen. The professor, whose face had also suddenly become noticeably red, turned to his companion and began to talk with great volubility about a certain kind of moss, to the surprise of Herwig, who thought it rather singular that

he should discuss a scientific subject just on the eve of their separation.

Meanwhile the carriage had driven up, the baggage was brought out and put on, and the landlord came with all his family to bid the departing guests farewell. But Professor Normann was still absorbed in his mosses, and Dora was still searching for her vail. She now appeared and asked :

" Friedel, didn't you see my vail? You carried my hat into the house yesterday."

The poor boy dared not answer, but hung his head in conscious guilt. Just at that moment, however, aid came from the quarter where he least expected it. His master suddenly turned, unceremoniously took the flowers from his hand, and said to the young lady :

" Here is a farewell offering from Schlehdorf, Fräulein Dora."

It was a happy thought, for the other occupants of the house now surrounded the departing travelers, and also offered their bouquets. Farewells were exchanged, hands shaken, and the missing vail, in the general interchange of last words, was luckily forgotten. Freidel was deeply offended. He had gathered and tied the flowers, and then the professor took them away and gave them to the young lady, while he stood by with empty hands. He did not feel recon-

ciled in the least till Dora called him and bade him good-by in the most affectionate way.

Then the travellers took their seats in the carriage, hands were waved in farewell and it rolled away into the sunny morning. Tears streamed down Friedel's cheeks, but he suddenly remembered that the road led around the whole lake and could be overlooked from the little hill at the end of the garden. Off he darted to the spot, and the professor, who had also remembered it, followed with long strides. Both stood watching the carriage which really remained in sight a long time. Friedel sobbed bitterly, and Normann scolded him, but he looked as if he would gladly have joined in the lad's expressions of grief.

"Don't cry," he said at last. "You shall see the young lady again next spring. We will go to Heidelberg."

Friedel's tears suddenly ceased; his eyes sparkling and almost breathless with joyful excitement he asked :

"I too?"

"Of course. Fräulein Dora would give me a fine welcome if didn't bring you, but you must get well first, do you understand? I won't take such a puny fellow as you are now. You must grow into a stout, rosy cheeked lad, who will do me credit."

"I'll try my very best," said the boy, earnestly.

"Yes, many will do that," muttered the professor. He did not add what he thought, that would be easier for Friedel to grow fat and rosy than for him to become like a human being, as was required by a certain person. It wouldn't do to be a morose recluse, a misanthropic hermit if—well, if a man wanted to go to Heidelberg.

"Friedel," he said, with his eyes still fixed upon the receding carriage, "what was that ditty you learned yesterday, the song about Heidelberg? Do you remember it?"

Friedel nodded and instantly began in his musical voice:

"Old Heidelberg, so dear, so fair."

He recollect ed both words and tune perfectly and sang through the verse correctly; just as he was closing, the most extraordinary, unprecedented thing happened. Professor Normann began to sing himself. Yes, he actually sang and when Friedel stared at him in horror with his mouth wide open in astonishment, he repeated the last verse alone. The notes were false, it is true, but his powerful bass voice echoed across the lake after the disappearing vehicle.

"Thy name doth set my heart aglow.
Like the fall of a bride's light feet,
The rapturous joy it doth bestow
Is like love's whispers sweet."



Professor Herwig was pacing up and down his study impatiently, in a somewhat irritated mood. Ever anon he glanced at the clock and then returned to the window, which overlooked the street. The train had arrived some time before, and the travellers it brought, ought to have reached the city long ago, but no carriage was in sight.

He was expecting Professor Normann, who had accepted the appointment in Heidelberg University and was to arrive that day. During the brief peroid in which he was to make his preparations for the removal, he had accepted Professor Herwig's proffered hospitality.

The clock now struck twelve, an hour after the train was due, and his host could arrive at no conclusion except that by some accident he had missed it. No doubt a message would come in the course of the day. Somewhat vexed by this lack of punctuality, Herwig at last left the room to inform his daughter, who had waited in the garden, that the expected guest was missing.

Herwig lived in one of the villas on the heights, and the garden, situated on the slope of the hill, afforded a view of the whole city and its environs. The season was early spring, everything was budding and blossoming in the first fullness of life. The fruit-trees were already in bloom. Everywhere in the gardens, among

the houses, on the slopes, a white or rosy vail glimmered, and the mountains beyond were like a sea of fragrance. The waves of the Neckar flashed and sparkled in the bright noon sunshine far down the beautiful valley, and the horizon seemed vailed by a silvery mist. The song was true, spring *did* linger on her way northward to weave for the city from her blossoms “*a shimmering bridal robe.*”

Herwig’s eyes wandered with quiet delight over the landscape which had grown so dear to him. He did not understand how any one could be indifferent to the charm of scenery, like his colleague, Normann. No doubt the latter’s eccentricity would cause both him and the university a great deal of trouble. Highly as he valued his scientific attainments, he did not conceal from himself that the new professor’s brusqueness and want of tact would often give offence. These traits would hardly change if he continued, in his new position, the old life of seclusion, and obstinately shut himself as before from all society.

“I’ll speak to him again,” said Herwig in a low tone, “though I scarcely think it will be of any avail. I’ll have a talk with him at any rate, though whether it will be possible to change him—”

Suddenly he paused and fairly started back at the sight he beheld. On a little vine-grown

terrace sat his daughter, and beside her—his missing colleague, of whose rudeness and aversion to society he had just been thinking. At present, neither of these characteristics was visible in the professor. His arm was thrown around the young girl, as he kissed again and again the rosy little face while Dora quietly submitted. Both were so absorbed in their mutual happiness that they did not see the new comer, who stood rigid and motionless as a pillar of salt, fairly speechless.

“Why Dora,—Professor Normann!” he cried at last.

The lovers started up, Dora was crimson with blushes, but Normann rushed to his astonished host and clasped him in vehement embrace.

“Professor! Father-in-law! Here I am, and introduce myself as your son-in-law.”

Had a son-in-law dropped from the clouds at his feet, Herwig could not have looked more amazed and startled than by this announcement, and when Dora now ran to him also and hid her blushing face on his shoulder, he exclaimed almost beside himself:

“My child, in heaven’s name, what does this mean? Do you really—”

“Yes, she does, Herr Colleague,” interrupted Normann, triumphantly. “She really does! don’t understand it. Nor I either. But I’ll

marry her. I'll marry her, no matter what happens."

"Yes, papa, you must give us your blessing," said Dora softly, with a happy smile. "Julius walked from the station and saw me in the garden, so—so he came to me first."

Herwig was still too much bewildered to give the customary blessing. He would have expected anything rather than this betrothal. His gay, saucy Dora and this blunt, reserved man, who held aloof from all the pleasures of life! Normann doubtless read these thoughts in his face for he said with a touch of banter which, however, had no trace of ill-humor.

"You look as if you would like to exterminate your future son-in-law. I don't blame you, for I'm a very unamiable fellow, but that will change, believe me, that will change as soon as Dora is my wife. I've already begun to be civilized—look!"

He thrust both hands through his hair, a gesture quickly accomplished, for the "shock" had vanished. It had been possible to keep it smooth only by using a bottle of hair-oil daily, and, as the professor felt no inclination to become a "perambulating pomade-pot," he had sacrificed his beloved locks and now, with his close-cut hair and the radiant expression which fairly transformed his morose features, looked ten years younger.

"Yes, the beginning is promising," said Dora, mischievously, "but the trial will come during the next few weeks. We must pay betrothal visits to half the town."

Normann's radiant face grew very long at this announcement, and in a melancholy voice he repeated :

"Betrothal visits? *Must* it be done, Dora?"

"Yes, Julius, it must," replied the young lady with the decision of a fiancé who is determined not to drop the sceptre during her married life. The professor folded his hands resignedly and said in a melancholy tone :

"If it can't be helped—so be it."

This was indeed self conquest, which could not fail to have its effect on Herwig. He gazed into the beseeching eyes of his child, who pressed closer to him, saying coaxingly :

"Papa, we are still waiting for your consent," held out his arms, and exclaimed :

"Well, I suppose there is nothing left for me to do, except to say also: 'If it can't be helped, so be it.'"

"Where is that boy, Friedel?" cried Normann, after the general embracing was over. "I sent him away just now, because I wanted to talk to Dora. Friedel, where are you?"

The lad came forward from behind the rose-bushes at the other end of the garden. He had spoken to Dora before he was sent off to be out

of the way, and now approached Professor Herwig who looked at him in astonishment. True, Friedel had only half accomplished the task the professor had so sternly ordered him to perform. He had not grown stout, but rosy-cheeked, and was now a slender, pretty boy whose blue eyes sparkled with youthful vivacity, like those of other lads of his age. The poor, stunted plant had developed into a blooming human flower with wonderful speed. What the visit to Schlehdorf had commenced, the last six months had completed; the lad was evidently perfectly well.

"Come here, Friedel, I've hardly spoken to you yet," said Dora. "Well, how did you spend the winter? Did you clean boots diligently?"

She glanced mischievously at her betrothed husband, who did not seem to hear the question.

"I've been drawing!" exclaimed Friedel with beaming eyes. "The professor hired another boot-black."

"The doctor said that the boy must be spared work for a while," muttered Normann in evident embarrassment, "and so he has been scrawling from morning till night. But just wait. Now you are well again the scrawling and the idle life must both stop—and besides, you can congratulate Fräulein Dora and me too. We are engaged and shall soon be married."

"Yes, I knew that in Schlehdorf," replied Friedel, quietly.

"Well then, you knew more than we did ourselves," said Dora in a jesting tone, but her protégé looked at her with a smile.

"I thought of it first after you had gone and the professor did nothing but look at the vail. *I* stole the vail, and was roundly scolded for it, and then the professor took it away from me and kept it himself and looked at it morning, noon, and night, and Sepp—"

"You good-for-nothing fellow. Will you keep quiet?" cried Normann, trying to seize him, but Dora stepped between them.

"My vail which I could not find when we went away? And what had Sepp to do with it?"

"Don't say another word," said the professor sternly, while Dora laughingly encouraged the boy.

"Tell me, Friedel. He shall not harm you."

Friedel appeared to possess unerring penetration. He already knew perfectly well which one of the couple to obey and took sides with the stronger party. Under her protection, he began to talk confidently and related the whole story from beginning to end.

"But Normann, Normann," said Herwig, half smiling, half reproachful. "A man of science and superstitions! How does that agree?"

"Pshaw! Love is inexplicable, too," replied Normann, looking at his fiancé who was laughing at him as gaily and saucily as she ever did in the mountains.

"And this is the man who expects us to respect his higher standpoint. Julius, don't you feel ashamed before papa and me?"

The professor was far too happy to be ashamed. He had not felt half so comfortable on his higher standpoint, as in this descent into disgraceful superstition; besides, what had a man's keeping his lady-love's vail, and occasionally looking at it, to do with superstition? That was entirely an affair of the heart. But why need that blundering fellow, Friedel, tell all he knew? Normann was strongly inclined to collar him, but when he heard that merry, joyous laugh, which he had so long missed, he renounced all thoughts of vengeance and laughed too.

The old gardener now appeared to say that Professor Normann's baggage had been sent from the station. Herwig led the way into the house to give the necessary orders, and the betrothed couple slowly followed. Suddenly Dora stopped and pointed to a rose-bush which, in advance of all its companions, was covered with fresh green foliage.

"That is my last year's nursling. See how vigorously it is growing, it will have a quantity

of roses in the summer. And Friedel, we will keep him with us."

"So that he may be continually spying about as he did in Schlehdorf. I'll take good care to prevent it. I'll go with him to-morrow to your teacher, who will probably pronounce him a prodigy, like all the artists I consulted at home. They are unanimous over what they call the youth's marvellous talent. He can attend the drawing-school and later the academy and, if he doesn't become a famous man in ten years, I'll wring his neck."

Friedel heard neither this determination of his future nor the terrible threat which accompanied it. He had gone forward with Professor Herwig, and the story of the vail was still running in his head. *He* had stolen the vail and the professor had won the bride. This did not seem to suit the legend and Friedel could not understand it. But at last he consoled himself with the reflection that, after all, he had been the principal personage in the whole affair for—as old Sepp had emphasized—the vail *must* be stolen.

THE END.

THE UNSIGNED WILL.



THE UNSIGNED WILL.

CHAPTER I.



NLY a single window of the stately old German manor-house was illuminated; everywhere else all was as dark and still within as without. Shadows moved behind the closed curtains; the lamp was carefully shaded, and the valances of the high, four-post bed were drawn partly back. On the pillow lay an old man over sixty years of age, with white hair and sunken countenance. His eyes flashed restlessly whenever he aroused himself from the light slumber into which he now and then fell. Although very ill, perhaps dying, it was mani-

fest that he was yet complete master of his mental faculties. Between his fingers he held a crumpled sheet of paper, and from time to time his glance sought the face of the silent watcher at his bedside.

"Rudolph," whispered he, "why doesn't the notary come? I have so little time to wait."

The person addressed, evidently the physician, furtively felt the pulse of the dying man, then looked uneasily toward the two men who, with caps in their hands, sat over in the corner.

"The notary," he said, "will soon be here. In the meantime, Andreas, take this powder."

The invalid swallowed the medicine with difficulty.

"Musk!" he whispered. "Good! Good! I must live at any price until this will is signed."

Again there ensued a pause. In spite of the precautionary measures that had been taken, it was soon evident that the patient was sinking rapidly; and the doctor bent anxiously over him.

"Andreas," he said, speaking kindly and with emotion, "you are a man; you knew always that your suffering was past remedy. There is something that you should communicate to me, your oldest and lifelong friend. Speak now."

The sick man shook his head.

"Is death so near, Rudolph? So near! Why doesn't Dahlberg come?"

Doctor Arning held his friend's hand between his own.

"Andreas, shall I call your wife?"

"No! No! I will live—I must live—until the will is signed!"

At this moment the sound of carriage-wheels were heard in the court below. The doctor wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Andreas," said he, "Dahlberg has come. Oh, why, why did you wait until this night?"

The dying man gave a short and bitter laugh.

"Wherefore, Rudolph? Perhaps it was the only means by which I was able to accomplish my object, friend. Now I will beg you to call the notary, and you, yourself, remain with me until all is over. Do you understand me? How fortunate that you returned from your journey to-day!"

The physician was silent and deeply moved. The few words told to him a long, sad history; he did not again venture to make any inquiries.

The notary now entered, followed by his clerk. A look from the doctor explained the patient's condition. After a short greeting, he bent affectionately over the dying man.

"How goes it with you, Andreas?" he asked.

Andreas moved his head uneasily from side to side.

"Meinhold," gasped he, "I have no time to waste. Make haste! Make haste, I pray!"

Here is my will. Oh, I die so willingly—so willingly!"

He gave the notary a slip of paper, written with his own hand, evidently very old. Doubtless it had been preserved a long time in some secret hiding-place.

"Write," whispered he; "write, Meinholt! The lamp is growing dim; light a candle."

The pen of the clerk flew over the paper. Again an intelligent glance passed between the doctor and the notary. In five minutes the will was ready for the signature. Doctor Arning supported the patient, while Dahlberg with one hand gave him the pen, and with the other held the light. Over the pale, death-like countenance passed a smile of triumph. "At last! At last!"

The watchers held their breath as the pen so unsteadily guided approached the paper, then fell, and a shudder ran through the frame of the dying man. Something like a groan broke from his lips as he saw the blot made by the fallen pen upon the paper. Doctor Arning bent lower over his friend; the others maintained a reverent silence.

Several minutes passed, than the old physician raised himself, and let the lifeless body slip softly from his arms back upon the pillow.

"Too late!" he said, sadly; "A moment—one short moment too late! He is dead!"

The notary seemed greatly moved. As the

clerk and witness noiselessly left the death-chamber, he approached his old friend.

"That unfortunate child," he said; "she will probably not receive one penny from the bounty of her aunt."

The doctor nodded.

"Not one penny, Meinholt. That poor girl was the only real subject of continuous dispute between our poor Andreas and his wife. I have been here daily, and am, alas! only too well acquainted with these sad circumstances. Frau Berning hates the child of her sister-in-law."

Dahlberg held out his hand to him.

"I thank you, Rudolph, for this intelligence," said he; "I will at least say a good word for the poor chid, now—immediately in this solemn hour. Will you accompany me?"

The physician shook his head.

"Not now, Meinholt, and it is of no use. You can more easily soften a stone than the heart of this woman."

But Dahlberg did not allow himself to be dis-couraged. After a silent but heartfelt farewell over the body of his old friend, he went at once to the room of the mistress of the house. Frau Berning was still beautiful, but hardness and pride were clearly traced upon her repellent countenance. In her apartments all was elegance and comfort; silken hangings and rare works of art on every side. A painful contrast

to the desolate chamber, where among strangers the tormented and lonesome soul of the master of this castle had just passed away.

Dahlberg perceived the contrast with pain, as he entered in answer to the summons. Frau Berning remained standing at the window, in an icy, almost insulting, attitude.

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit, Mr. Notary?" asked she. "It is highly probable that a will has been prepared by you, a document which the rights of my son—"

Dahlberg's glance silenced her.

He approached her, still holding in his hand his hat, which she had not offered to take.

"Frau Berning," said he, in stern tones, "do you know what has occurred in this house within the last few minutes?"

No muscle of the lady's face changed.

"A servant brought me the long-anticipated message," answered she, quietly. "But to return again to the will, so—"

"Alas! it did not become valid in law!"

"Not valid!" she almost screamed; "not valid, Notary? And what prevented this insane plan?"

"Death, honored madam!" He took from his pocket the unsigned will, and showed her the blot made by the fallen pen. "This document needed only the signatures of the testators," said he, seating himself. "It is the proof of what Andreas Berning in his last moments most earn-

estly wished, and would have become legal had God permitted him to live one minute longer. I hope, I expect from your reverence for the dead, from your sense of justice, that you will hold as sacred the directions contained in it."

The lady laughed mockingly.

"What is contained in this valueless paper, Mr. Notary?"

Dahlberg's heart sank.

"May I read it to you? I will beg you to listen:

"I, Julius Andreas Berning, hereby bequeath from my estate to Antonia Clara Armfeld, minor daughter of my deceased and only sister, Henrietta Maria Armfeld, *nee* Berning, now living in my house, the sum of fifty thousand *thalers*, and she shall receive the interest upon this sum from this day forward, and further, I direct that the said Antonia Clara shall remain in my house until she shall marry, and shall in all respects be treated as my own daughter.'

"Surely, Frau Berning," said the notary, beseechingly, "you will acknowledge this!"

The widow seated herself leisurely upon a sofa, while she waved her hand toward a chair opposite for her visitor, which tardy invitation Herr Dahlberg allowed to pass unheeded.

"I will have no part in the robbery planned

against my son," she said, sharply. "The whole thing is a madness resulting from fever, the out-growth of disease. My niece neither remains in this house, nor shall she receive one penny from me."

Dahlberg was not now frightened, and a spirit of revolt rose within him.

"How!" cried he, "will you dispossess that unfortunate child? Impossible!"

The lady shrugged her shoulders.

"I say that the unwelcome stranger must go, Notary, and that is all about it!"

The eyes of the honest man flashed.

"But," cried he, passionately, "how do you know that your dead husband had not some especial reasons for this determination, Frau Berning?"

She was so suddenly and violently alarmed that her consternation was perfectly apparent.

"Reasons, Notary? Reasons? Has your dear Andreas made any such statement?"

This was uttered in a hoarse, scarcely intelligible whisper. As if in deadly fear Dahlberg wavered. One, yes, even half an admission, and the victory was won, but at the price of a lie; perhaps, indeed, the accusation of the dead.

Only a second did he hesitate, then he shook his head.

"No, Frau Berning, not a word."

"Ah!"

The lady tremblingly pressed her handkerchief to her lips, but the color which mounted to her brows showed how excited she had become.

"I believe our conversation is at an end, Mr. Notary," she said, rising. "My resolution is taken. The child must leave this house immediately after the funeral."

"And whither, if I may ask? She has not a farthing of her own in the world, madam. Shall your niece go to the poorhouse?"

Fräu Berning shrugged her shoulders.

"God prosper her. I shall trouble myself in no way about her fate."

The old man seized his hat, which he had, in the heat of conversation, laid upon the table.

"May heaven forgive you!" he ejaculated. "I have the honor to wish you good-night."

She laughed, bowing her head proudly.

"Yet first, Mr. Notary, if I may dare: The so-called will is my property, at any rate, is it not? You will, without doubt, leave the paper here; in return for which, I will take pleasure in settling your account for you."

"I thank you very much, madam," he answered, gruffly. "The paper was paid for by me; also the clerk; consequently, I cannot see how you can have any property in it. I am your most obedient—"

He was out of the room almost while speaking giving her no chance to detain him, and immedi-

ately thrust into his pocket the fatal document, whose contents she would so willingly have concealed from the whole world. This one bitter feeling nearly destroyed Fräu Berning's almost intoxicating triumph; but, nevertheless, the feeling of unexpected joy rose higher and higher in her soul.

Only half an hour ago, she had stood looking out into the dreary November night, when all had seemed lost, vainly struggling against what seemed the superior power of fate, when suddenly the threatened danger was removed, and she remained after, as before her husband's death, in possession.

No one dared command, no one dared force her to suffer the existence of that hated being near herself.

Taking a lamp, she stepped rapidly but composedly through the corridor until she came to the chamber of death, where she startled the old woman who was watching by the dead, whom, with an imperious wave of the hand, she ordered to depart. Then, when she was alone, she went to the bed, and threw aside the cloth that covered the face of the dead. Her glance sought, without one trace of emotion or one sigh, the face of the man with whom she had lived for twenty long years so cheerless, heartless and unhappy a married life; toward whom, during the past few years, she had cherished a feeling

of bitter and relentless hatred. Now this was all over, all past, as if it had never been.

Regina Berning laid her warm and brilliantly ringed hand upon the icy forehead of the dead.

"Sleep, Andreas," she said, half aloud, as if speaking to him. "To-day I make my peace with you." And then she replaced the cloth.

But there was yet another visit for her to make this dreadful night; another triumph for her to enjoy.

In the corner of a little, plainly furnished room, at the back of the house, stood a small bed and toward this room and bed the proud woman, in her flowing silk gown, and with her lamp-shade lowered, directed her noiseless step.

She had entered the room quite silently, and was greatly startled to find that, in spite of her precautions, two large eyes with intelligent expression, were regarding her anxiously from the pillow.

Upon the bed lay a young girl, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, whose rosy face upon a background of fresh, white linen had a rarer charm than any flower. Her brown locks hung around her head; one arm had escaped from the loose draperies of the bed, and the delicately rounded neck showed a line that would have delighted a sculptor. But the most attractive feature about the child was her beautiful hazel eyes, with long, silken lashes, which looked at

you with a gentle expression of innocence and amiability.

"Aunt," whispered Toni, "I have heard so many strange steps going to and fro in the house to-night; has anything happened to my poor uncle?"

Fräu Regina remained unmoved by the anxious voice of the child opposite her. Indeed, in the expression of her cold, gray eyes mere indifference gave place to hatred and a hidden passion. She rejoiced in the blow which, with her own hand, she could deal to this young and defenceless creature.

"Andreas Berning died to-night," she said, without a word of warning, and then turned to leave the room.

One frightened cry rang out from the lips of the child.

"Dead!" cried she, with a shudder, for the sad word had pierced her heart. "Dear aunt, do not leave me alone—in the dark! Oh, do stay with me!"

Fräu Regina went from the room as quietly and calmly as if she had heard nothing. Around the corners of her mouth lurked a hard, cruel smile.



CHAPTER II.

Five years had passed. An eternity, if they lie before us full of threatening and of pain, but as nothing when they lie behind us, whether they brought us tears or joy.

Two young men sat together in a small, but well-ordered counting-room, which was both elegantly and attractively furnished. One was smoking, while before him upon a table were a wine-glass and a cigar-box. The other, manifestly at home here, in *negligé* and wearing eye-glasses, was a young advocate, Ernest Dahlberg, the son of the old notary, who had succeeded to the practice of his deceased father. His friend was Oscar Berning, the young master of Schorndorf. Oscar, who was taller and more commanding than Dahlberg, had the deep-gray eyes and haughty bearing of his mother. He, however, lacked her faculty for business, and, since reaching his majority, had allowed his tenants to manage the estate, that he might escape the

wearisome work of the landlord, which would have encroached upon his valuable leisure.

Oscar, since his earliest recollection, had been accustomed to hear from his mother that he was born to riches, good fortune and enjoyment. He had, while yet a boy, large sums of money at his disposal, and only his desire for knowledge and keen, penetrating intellect had he to thank, that he had not grown up an ignorant, arrogant and worthless man. Fräu Regina, in her blind idolatry for her only son, had always said: "Be happy," never for one moment imagining so idle a life could possibly be a burden to him. Oscar learned easily; he studied, traveled and acquired a liberal culture; but he was at heart the egotist which his mother's ill-judged training had made him. His own personality, notwithstanding all his intelligence and amiability, was for him, though, perhaps, unconsciously, the center of creation. He simply denied the existence of whatever was disagreeable or repulsive; he waived all such things out of his life, without asking how far the rights of others might be injured by such a course.

"Now," he said, suspiciously, "I see in your face, Ernest, that you are about to favor me with some sort of a moral lecture. Is there no possibility of my escaping it?"

"Scarcely," was the somewhat ironical answer.

" You must begin to value the worth of money more, Oscar, as well as—"

" I thank you very much, but spare me the conclusion, I beg, my dear boy. It will, I trust, keep for a while."

The advocate shook his head.

" You are a wealthy man, Oscar, although you have from year to year impaired your income. Your father accumulated capital, and was constantly increasing it; you, with your ability to waste, have shamefully squandered it."

For one moment the young exquisite appeared startled.

" What does it matter?" said he, helplessly. " Shall I from early morning until late at night drive the horse and plow the fields and thresh, or haggle with the corn dealers? Better not live at all."

Dahlberg drew his fingers along the edge of a map.

" That is inconceivable to me," he said. " Heavens, if I possessed such a magnificent estate in this blessed fatherland, such lands—ah, if I owned but the tenth part of them!—I would be as happy as a god."

" But *my* fortune is not in question here," continued he, after a pause. " You must, in future, spend less than you have done the past year. You must reduce your household expenses—instead of six or seven fine horses, keep only two,

and lastly, you should not purchase such expensive toys. That additional building, with the internal improvements, has alone cost twenty thousand *thalers*, while it does not yield a penny of profit."

Oscar answered nothing; indeed for the moment his soul was far removed from his surroundings, and he had not heard one word the young advocate had uttered. He saw, in his mind's eye, a beautiful room, exquisitely decorated in blue and gold, and, most beautiful of all, a charming young maiden with curling, brown locks and hazel eyes. Ah, eyes which he could never forget, and whose loveliness had pursued him and threatened to destroy his peace.

He had spoken to her also of his estate; she had sketched pictures and drawn plans while he sat listening, and he had thought that the lovely being must be a supernatural creation, and her voice, the voice of fate.

While moonbeams had played around the lovely head, and had danced like shadows, or frolicsome silver fairy-rings, through the room, the young lips had painted alluring pictures or had spoken to him of the nobility of life.

"Were I in your place," said the maiden with the star-like eyes, "I should make beautiful Schorndorf a bit of Eden upon earth. I would put the great waste heath under cultivation; the water from the river would give it over a hun-

dred small canals, and all the poor day laborers from the wretched village huts could possess comfortable homes and cultivate their own little gardens. They would then be able to assist their aged parents, and train their children to be capable and useful men and women; each little family with its small possession, would be for me a visible living blessing. Now only the plover flies over the worthless and uncultivated heath, while in her ground lies unbroken the treasure that would bring happiness and peace to deserving hundreds."

It was a pleasure to him to hear the soft, melodious voice, and see the prophetic glance of those wonderful eyes.

"My Schorndorf!" she had said. "My beautiful Schorndorf!"

The sound of her voice was so tender and sorrowful that he felt himself strangely agitated, and his heart beat painfully.

He had pressed his lips to her hand, and had whispered passionate words, and he soon recalled how the tears had glistened like diamonds upon her eye-lashes.

"Of what are you thinking so earnestly?" asked Dahlberg. "I had not meant to frighten you, Oscar."

"What—?

And Berning turned towards him, as if awakened from a dream.

"Forgive me, Ernest, I did not hear what you said. What was it?"

Dahlberg laughed.

"I warned you, Oscar, that it was necessary for you to follow my advice; but do as you think fit. You are your own master. I have another and a more interesting subject upon which to talk to-day."

"And that is?" said the young man, carelessly.

It mattered little to him what answer his companion would make. He only uttered the query out of politeness.

The advocate appeared busily employed with the tobacco box. He had so placed himself that it was impossible for Oscar to see his face or note its expression.

"You well know," began he, "for I told you at the time, that I found among my father's papers the codicil which your father had added to the will before his death. The poor man died just as he was about to sign it—died with the pen in his hand; but you know all the particulars of that sad time. You refused most decidedly to make good this last and anxiously desired will of your father and—

"And now my precious cousin has probably written you a tearful letter. Is it not so, Ernest?" interrupted the young heir, scornfully. "She has been out of a situation for a couple of months, or is sick or destitute. Which is it? At

all events, she begs you, in six pages, to soften my hard heart and send her at least a hundred thalers. Is it not so?"

"No," answered the advocate, coolly; "nothing of that sort, Oscar. But I have discovered, quite unexpectedly, that your beautiful cousin is identical with a young lady whom we both know—with Fräulein Armfeld, the companion of the beautiful Countess Hartenstein of Schlossberg."

"What do you say? What?" Berning had become deadly pale, his eyes burned, and he almost gasped for breath. "She, did you say? She—?"

Dahlberg nodded.

"That beautiful and amiable maiden," said he, half aloud; "that magnificent creature; that highly-cultivated lady, and yet so charmingly unaffected. Do you remember her, Oscar?"

The question sounded like bitter scorn, and added no little to the heart-ache its hearer felt so keenly.

"Slightly, I believe," he answered; "but that is not the question here, Ernest. Does she know the contents of that insane will? For that I am the son of her uncle she must certainly know."

"That is at least probable. Did you and she never meet as children?"

"Never. I was away at the university, and seldom came home. I never remember even

having heard her name. But answer me, Ernest : Does she know the contents of that paper ? Surely—I read it in your eyes."

"In truth," said Dahlberg, "I believe she does, although I am not positive."

Oscar gazed at him scornfully.

"You are very innocent!" he cried. "Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! The device is transparent, my good friend. She received that document from your hand."

"Oscar!"

"What is your pleasure ? But why do I allow myself to become enraged?" added he, shrugging his shoulders. "Show her what you will, do what you can, it matters not to me. I have the law with me. The whole world may hear that I was not inclined to present to a stranger fifty thousand *thalers* from an inheritance that had cost my mother such bitter tears—indeed, that had caused her unhappiness during her entire married life. None but a lunatic would do such a thing!"

He had thrown his cigar down, and now hastily drew on his gloves.

"Adieu, Ernest. I will not disturb you any longer."

The young advocate shook his head.

"Oscar, will you not give me time to justify myself ? You are doing a great injustice to an old friend."

Oscar turned on his heel.

"Judge of that as you will. Good evening."

And then he went out, believing that the deep wound he had just received would be concealed under his careless exterior. He went, in great agitation, direct to the great house at Schlossberg, the residence of the Countess Hartenstein.

How deeply his friend's news had disturbed him! How ruthlessly had it destroyed the dream of the last month!

He had gone very often to the house of the fashionable young widow, the Countess of Hartenstein; indeed, more frequently than any of the other cavaliers, who, like him, spent their days in idle amusement or reckless dissipation. He was always most welcome, perhaps because the aristocratic charms of the young countess had appeared to make no impression upon him. Indeed, all her vaunted sorceries seemed to have no power over him; and, partly in anger, she had conferred upon him the title of "Youthful Patriarch," which, indeed, seemed most appropriate. She did not imagine nor did any one else, why he came so frequently. In the drawing-room he sometimes met the companion, the beautiful, gentle girl mentioned before. He heard her soft, friendly greeting; he basked in the glance of her beautiful eyes; and when, in the changing mood of her young mistress, she was summoned to the piano, he forgot all else in listening to her thrilling tones.

"So sings the birch to the heath," she had said to him; "so sounds the sorrowful November wind. Have you not heard it?"

And gradually their acquaintance ripened into intimacy.

He was often at the mansion some little time before the countess was informed of his presence, and was thus able to have fifteen or twenty minutes' chat alone with the companion, always holding her hand and feeling no desire to free himself from the meshes she was weaving around his heart; happy for the first time, and almost filled with reverence as he gazed on the young and charming creature opposite him, and jealous of the secret which he and she together were hiding from the world. While no promise had been given on either side, each understood the feeling of the other. He had stood by her at the window and drawn her gently to himself until her head lay upon his shoulder, and had kissed the tears from the long, silken lashes; and then the question had risen to his lips:

"Toni, do you love me?"

She only looked at him, for they were immediately interrupted by the entrance of a third person; and later she was obliged to play and sing at the bidding of the countess.

As the music sounded, gay and joyful, it seemed to bring to him a thousand greetings of unspeakable joy; but when it suddenly changed

to a low and plaintive melody, it sounded like the voice of a bird bidding farewell forever to its mate. He saw, in fancy, his home, the old heath castle, with mighty oaks and lofty towers, and himself standing at the window, but alone and pale and full of deadly sorrow.

What was it? Had he lost her, that life of his life? He started.

The music had died away; the twilight wove its shadows around the lovely brown head, and the countess tapped him lightly upon the shoulder with her fan.

"Are you dreaming, my friend?"

Yes, he had been dreaming; a vision had suddenly taken possession of his soul, and it was with difficulty that he regained his self-control.

"You do not answer," continued the hostess. "You are absolutely barbarous—quite *blasé*—for my little Toni has never sung and played so well before."

He bent low and kissed the hand of the young musician, as though she had been a queen. The Countess Emilie looked surprised, while Toni hurriedly left the room; and it seemed as if she sobbed as she passed out.

And so to-day he had resolved to openly press his suit. Then came Ernest with his wretched and unexpected communication, suddenly destroying his new happiness, turning his blood to poison, indeed, almost killing him.

Oscar had seen so much of woman's treachery that a deep and ineradicable distrust had taken possession of his soul. He had seen deception in every cordial word, and avarice and flattery in every friendly advance, until he met Toni, and for the first time believed himself beloved for his own sake, and not for the sake of his wealth. Now he laughed, bitterly and scornfully :

"She, of all others!"

And she had completely ensnared him. He would show her that it was not so easy to deceive him ; that he had both the strength and courage to break the net she had woven. Toni had known from the beginning who *he* was ; she had even known the contents of the will. Hence her interest in him, and her unconcealed encouragement. Had she been honest and frank with him, he would not have hesitated to make her his wife, in spite of all that had happened. But now—never ! Her punishment should be bitter and humiliating. She should suffer as he suffered.

She met him in the drawing-room, as usual. Her gray gown, with its broad satin embroideries and flame-colored bows, set off to advantage her graceful, willowy figure, while the timid glance and flushed cheek made her appear doubly charming. Toni knew that on this evening Oscar intended to present her to the countess as his betrothed. His own heart beat

painfully, but he felt the bitter disappointment keenly, and the deception and his wounded pride made him forget all else.

His manner was cold and forbidding.

"Is your mistress at home?" he asked, as though addressing a servant. "Please announce to her my presence."

The young girl looked at him, turned suddenly pale and reached out her hand, as though groping for support.

What was it? What had happened?

He rejoiced in his own bleeding heart at her fright. He hoped she might suffer and execrate a thousand times her false play.

He had been in the habit, for some time past, of entering the house unannounced; so now he repeated his wish that the Countess Emilie be informed of his presence, in order that he might—for the first time—pay court to her.

Never before had he shone forth so brilliantly in conversation as on that evening, or displayed such wit and quickness at repartee; but he entirely ignored the companion, and when the countess ordered her to repeat the song she had yesterday sung so effectively, he shook his head, with a gesture of comical despair.

"Not to-night, dear Countess, I implore you. These lyric tears are frightful to me."

The countess laughed.

"'Lyric tears!' I must repeat that. Your

reputation for possessing a heart of ice will rise one degree higher—”

“I? A heart of ice?” interrupted he, half-aloud, with a significant glance, “and does the Countess Emilie make that assertion?”

His tone disconcerted her slightly. And when he pressed her hand gently while speaking, she could hardly realize it was Oscar Berning. She asked herself whether he was not striving to overcome some disappointed affection.

But that was of no consequence to her. Why not a little amusement? Why not play with fire? It would be a pleasant pastime and relieve the monotony of the day, and a passing flirtation would afford her a little excitement, and the victim, if Herr Berning should, after all, prove susceptible, must take care of himself—that was his affair, not hers.

Toni was restless on this eventful evening, and went occasionally into the adjoining room and there—Oscar perceived with secret triumph—pressed her burning brow against the window-pane, or raised her hands to her throbbing temples. “What had happened since yesterday?” She knew her lover well. Every tone of his voice, every glance of his eye; he affected this sudden boisterous manner, he laughed from despair. But she could not find any clue to his conduct; it was a riddle she could not solve. Elegant, idle young cavaliers amused themselves

so often with girls in her position. After the dreaming and hoping, comes the awakening to find promises broken, hopes unfulfilled and no reason given ; only the lightness of heart and the sweet visions of future bliss have departed, and melancholy musings are all that remain in their place. Bitter tears fell upon Toni's pale cheeks, and she went hastily to her own small room under the eaves, there to see, against the distant horizon, the towers of Schorndorf ; and the wind seemed to bear to her across the far heath a greeting from the lost home of her childhood. Toni sobbed as she had not done since that sad day when, after her uncle's funeral, her aunt had taken her without any preparation to the city, and after placing her under the care of the guardians for the poor, had told her she should never return to Schorndorf—never in her life.

To-day she felt again the same horror, the same terrible feeling of loneliness ; but what had in her childhood been a sharp pain, was now intensified as she realized how great was her loss, and felt how completely she was left in the dark as to its cause.

An hour passed before she again returned to the *salon*. Neither the countess nor Oscar had seemed to notice her absence. Indeed, when he arose to take his departure, Oscar said he would always consider this evening as the happiest of his life.

"You must in future receive me alone, gracious lady," he had said; "it is so much more agreeable for me, and even servants are an uncomfortable addition."

The countess caught the glance direct, as he spoke, toward her companion. What did it mean? But she would find out, and then—

Oscar went, with weary strides, over the fields toward Schorndorf. Alone in the night air, his fierce anger changed to quiet grief.

"Every one in the world has a friend except myself," he thought, mournfully. "I wonder whether my mother has pursued the right course in her anxiety to secure my happiness? But why brood over that? Whatever she did was done for love of me."

He had become quite softened, and could not forget Toni's sorrowful face; and when he met his mother, a few minutes later, he said, abruptly:

"Tell me, dear mother, something about my cousin and her life while in this house. Her name was Toni Armfeld, was it not? Where does she live now?"

Fräu Regina started violently.

"Has she written to you, Oscar?"

"Not a line, mother. She was called Toni Armfeld, was she not?"

He tested his strength while he spoke her name. His countenance remained calm, but he

seemed to feel an iron hand at his throat, and the room swam around him.

"Where does she live now, mother?"

Fräu Regina breathed heavily. Why this question? She could not remember that Oscar had ever seen his cousin.

"I have not heard of her for years," she said, with a shrug. "The child was a great hypocrite, and always most repulsive to me; she inherited from her mother a false manner, and always succeeded in captivating the hearts of those who did not know her depth."

Mrs. Berning had become deadly pale while speaking, and the cup, which her son had just offered her, fell with a clatter upon the carpet.

But Oscar's own nervousness was intense, and he did not notice it.

"Did you know her well, mother?" he asked.

"I—I—yes, I reared her. She had the most beautiful eyes and the most treacherous heart under the sun."

And softly Oscar repeated, "the most beautiful eyes!"

The evening passed very quietly. Upon both hearts lay an unacknowledged burden. Oscar kissed his mother, almost like a tired child needing consolation, as they separated for the night.

"It cannot last," he said, half aloud. "I must go to Africa, or the North Pole—anywhere away from here."

“ And leave me all alone, Oscar? Folly, folly, my heart’s love! Thy happiness lies nearer home, and is much greater than you divine. Marry the Countess Hartenstein ; she loves you, I know it.”

Oscar shuddered within himself. How much had happened during this day!

After he left his mother, she wrung her hands in agony.

“ He is unhappy, and dissatisfied with his life ! Oscar! Oscar! After all that I have sacrificed for him !”



CHAPTER III.

Early on the following morning, a letter came from Dahlberg, in which, in a few cool and courteous words, he declined the further management of Oscar's affairs.

"You must reduce your expenses and raise twenty thousand *thalers*," he wrote; "otherwise your property is endangered. But your rich Australian Uncle Karl can provide for that; for, as you doubtless know, he has just arrived. Better see what you can do. I have warned you."

Oscar's heart beat violently as he read the insulting note. All this had happened on Toni's account. Jealousy spoke in every line. Full of distrust and resentment, he crushed the letter in his hand. Later, it occurred to him that he must announce the threatened arrival of his uncle to his mother, for he had no doubt that

the uncle would come immediately to Schorndorf.

Fräu Regina looked at him, as though he had made a fearful announcement.

"Karl Berning!" stammered she. "Impossible! He is dead these many years."

Oscar felt alarmed.

"Dahlberg wrote it, mother. But, mother! What is the matter? You're going to faint!"

He caught the tottering and almost insane-looking woman in his arms.

"Mother, pray tell me what is the matter with you?"

His mother was now sobbing violently.

"When he comes, Oscar, remain with me. Do not desert me. But—no! No! Go away from here! You shall not speak with him at all—shall not see him! Perhaps the whole thing is a deception. Any adventurer might seek to impose upon us. I will refuse him admittance if he comes."

As she spoke she trembled in every limb. Oscar hardly understood what he saw. His mother, who had always been so strong and self-contained, had grown suddenly so feeble that she had to lean against him for support. After a pause, he said:

"You are hiding something from me, mother."

"I?" She became angry. "I? Whoever says it slanders me! But you have probably

seen your uncle ere this, and talked with him over old matters. Yes! Yes! I understand now why you made those inquiries yesterday regarding your cousin."

He shook his head, deeply troubled at heart.

"You are mistaken. I only know that Dahlberg has written."

Fräu Regina began crying again, and threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, my boy! My darling!" she sobbed. "Go away! Go away! He shall not see you! I will speak to him—I alone. Leave it all to me. But you must go away immediately, that he may not see you."

Oscar stroked her hand mechanically.

"No, mother; on the contrary, I will receive him," he said, quietly. "There is nothing that I should shun. Why should the old man want to injure us? Or how could he, even if he desired? Why should he not live here and become our friend?"

His mother seemed about to speak, but her agitation compelled her to be silent. After a time, she so far composed herself as to say, in a calm tone:

"I never knew my dead husband's brother. When I entered the family, he had already left the country—had been forced, I believe, to do so, as he had taken part in the revolution of 1848. For years we have all thought him dead.

Why, then, does he now return to disturb our peace?"

Oscar's heart sank deeper while he listened.

"Did my uncle never write?" he asked.

Fräu Berning shook her head, but no sound came from her lips.

No more questions were asked, and all was quiet in the morning-room; only the ticking of the little clock upon the escritoire disturbed the silence. Oscar said to himself that it was impossible for his mother to become so excited over the prospect of a casual visitor. He resolved to discover what had been hidden from him, and in the new and threatening clouds which were darkening his horizon almost forgot the fright which Dahlberg's communication had given him. Only a passing thought did he give to his own financial necessities. He certainly could never borrow from his uncle.

The long, dreary day passed slowly. As the shadows began to lengthen, a carriage drove up the avenue and halted before the door, and Oscar saw his mother, for the second time, almost faint, as she looked out.

"Go," she murmured, "go!"

But her son remained, although he did not answer her, and a minute later the servant announced :

"Herr Karl Berning."

In the door stood an old man, so like the dead

master of the house, resembling him so entirely in every respect, that Oscar involuntarily seized the outstretched hand. There was no deception, no imposture here. The voice of nature spoke so unquestionably that all words were superfluous. The old man had such a good, honest countenance and friendly, truthful eye, that his nephew gave him a hearty welcome even before he himself had been able to speak.

"God bless you, my boy," answered a deep-toned voice with foreign accent. "I hope to become great friends with the son of my only brother. There—give me your hand again, you have the eye and smile of your father."

Then he turned to the pale and trembling woman, who had remained silently standing, and although he spoke to her with less warmth, his tones were earnest.

"My sister-in-law," he said, "I have without doubt frightened you by my sudden appearance, you, doubtless, believing me dead these many years. I wish to obtain from you one piece of information, and if your answer proves satisfactory, all bygones shall be forgotten and forgiven for aye."

He stood near her, his great clear eyes fixed upon her uneasy countenance, while she, half stupified, shook her head.

"I do not know what information you expect from me, Brother Karl," she answered, hoarsely,

almost inaudibly, "nor how I can serve you; perhaps you have made a mistake. But will you not be seated?"

As Oscar had already taken his uncle's hat and rolled a chair up to him, she felt obliged to give this invitation.

The stranger shook his head.

"Not yet, sister-in-law; we must understand one another first. I have made no mistake, and I only ask from you an explanation, which you are fully able to give. Tell me, I beg, where I am to find Toni Armfeld, my sister's daughter?"

It was the question Fräulein Regina had expected to hear. She waited until she could sufficiently compose herself, and then the two men heard her say:

"I do not know!"

"How long since you did know?"

"The child came to us when she was six years old, Herr Berning; and in her thirteenth year, when my husband died, I took her back to the city. Since that time I have heard nothing of her."

"To whom did you give the unfortunate child? You cruel woman, why did you cast off the little waif?"

"Uncle," cried his nephew sharply, flushing suddenly, "you must not speak to my mother in such a tone; in any event she had a right to do as she chose."

The darkening eyes of the old man suddenly met Oscar's glance.

"We will not discuss the matter any further to-day," he said; "it is better not. To whom did your worthy mother surrender the child? I must discover that, and must go from here to the police, in order to obtain their assistance."

Fräu Regina raised her head wearily.

"I could not keep the child in my house; I owed her no duty; the city officials doubtless took charge of her."

"In plain language, madam, she was sent to the poor-house. God forgive you; I cannot! And you have no knowledge whatever of her present whereabouts?"

"None—and I have no desire to learn."

"Very good! You will not be annoyed by me a second time. I will use every means to discover my niece, and to supply the place you have deserted. Every means, my fine sister-in-law! Your conduct deserves no forbearance, you have—"

"Uncle, I must beg you to restrain yourself," cried Oscar, sharply, "otherwise—"

"Yes, yes, I understand, she is your mother, and you will protect her. You are right, my boy. I bid you farewell, Fräu Berning."

Berning went from his brother's house without having broken bread, or indeed, without having seated himself in it. As he left the room

he was followed by Oscar, whose sense of justice forbade him let his uncle depart without letting him know where Toni lived. The little he did know, he would tell immediately.

"One moment, uncle," he said; "my cousin is living at Schlossberg as companion to the Countess of Hartenstein. Pardon me for not telling you at once, but I wish to spare my mother."

The old man leaned heavily against the balusters and shook his head sadly.

"She has not been there since this morning," he answered in a low tone. "Oh, what madness, what barbarity, to drive this poor girl recklessly and heartlessly from her home. Whither? God alone knows, perhaps to her eternal ruin."

Oscar stood speechless, his handsome face alternately flushing and paling.

The old man lifted the iron-gray hair from his heated head.

"I will find her," he said, almost fiercely; "Toni is no longer defenseless. Does there still live in the city an old friend of mine named Meinholt Dahlberg, an advocate?"

Oscar shook his head.

"He has been dead for many years."

"And Fritz Soltan—Englebrecht Mehrens?"

"Dead—long since."

It was sad news for the white-haired old man to hear at the end of this wearisome, disappoint-

ing day ; and as his nephew answered his interrogatives, he grew paler and paler.

"Now for the last," he said, slowly, "my comrade in arms, my companion, Rudolph Arning?"

"Thank God!" cried Oscar, "he is living and is prosperous."

"The first good news," said the old man heartily. "Farewell, my son, I will come to this house no more."

Although Oscar tried to dissuade him, he went immediately, shaking his head sorrowfully as he departed, leaving the young heir alone. Oscar was possessed by many conflicting emotions, and felt he could not return to his mother in this frame of mind ; all within him was in a hopeless ferment. He was much distressed by the news that Toni had left Schlossberg. She might have been suddenly dismissed, or have left voluntarily, but, no matter what the reason given for her departure, he was sure he was the cause, and he felt as though he had committed a crime.

That day, earlier than usual, he again stood in the little blue *boudoir* where he was received with flattering, almost tender attention. The countess' gracious reception fascinated him, and he gave himself without resistance to the impression of the moment, without allowing himself to reflect. The countess certainly loved him, and for his own sake; *her* overtures, at

least, were sincere. Otherwise, what could she seek in him—she who was so greatly his superior in wealth and rank? His pulse beat rapidly and he whispered words which in his inmost soul he could not feel. But when, in leaving, the beautiful Emilie asked him, smilingly, if he had missed no one to-night, he felt a sudden pang of anguish.

His answer, however, was careless and unconstrained.

“Ah! Fräulein Armfeld; indeed, I observe now, for the first time, that she is not here!”

And yet in his heart the torture of separation had weighed heavily upon him all evening.

“She was uncomfortable,” continued the countess with a bewitching smile, “and I like to alter the decoration of my rooms now and then.”

Oscar felt sorely tempted to reprove these frivolous words with an ironical remark, but feared to betray, to this heartless woman, the true state of his feelings. So, after kissing the hand of the fair dame and smiling significantly, he departed, more discontented with himself than he had ever been in his life before.

He went directly to a private gambling club, where he was sure to meet many young men he knew, careless and idle, like himself, with no thought for the morrow and no care. Here he had frequently lost and won large sums, and, in his father’s lifetime, while he was yet a boy, his

mother had shielded him and taken no steps to prevent his continued presence at the gaming-table. She had said to him again and again :

" Be happy ; that is the quintessence of worldly wisdom ; deprive yourself of nothing, do not mar one hour ; there is no necessity for it, for you are rich.'

To-night he thought again of those words, and with much bitterness.

" Everyone bows before the owner of great wealth, and he is flattered and praised because of his possessions ; but of what use is that when his day of suffering comes ?"

He lost heavily that night, but hardly heeded the fact that from three to four thousand *thalers* were left on the gaming-table. He would marry the rich countess and all would be well. All? He dared not think. Perhaps if he had ventured to do so, he would have put a bullet through his head.

His mother was waiting for him on his return, and he was unable to pass by her door unobserved. She had been greatly disturbed by Karl Berning's visit, and her son was alarmed at her pale and excited appearance.

" You were with your uncle, Oscar," she whispered. " What has he told you? Do not believe him, my dear!"

The young man shook his head. Here, too, was discord—his mother concealed from him

something disgraceful, of that he was convinced, and the thought wounded him deeply. Whether it concerned his dead father, or whether—

A new weight was added to his already heavy burden, and he had nothing to do but succumb.

"I did not see him, mother," he answered; "I do not anticipate meeting him again. Good night; you disturb yourself without reason."



CHAPTER IV.

Late the following evening the two old friends sat in the doctor's library, just as had been their habit before their long separation. They had always been warm friends, keeping side by side in their school-days, and later during the exciting events which terminated in the revolution of 1848, until the sudden separation had been forced upon them.

Karl Berning went to Australia, and was heard from no more; he was believed to be dead and his brother as well as his sister-in-law had long since ceased from all inquiries in regard to him. His very name had been forgotten; and when he appeared again so suddenly old memories were aroused.

Rudolph Arning scarcely believed his eyes.

"And what power has brought you back to the old place, after an absence of thirty years, you restless spirit?" he asked, after the first hearty greeting was over.

The Australian shook his head.

"What power, Rudolph? Ah, old friend, my

heart. In spite of all so-called philosophy, in spite of all dead hopes, the heart still beats. At first, after the destruction of all our hopes, I hated the fatherland, and never wish to see it again, with its chains weighing it down. Then, again, as a political refugee, I did not dare return. But, after years, the desire of the present stifled all feelings of bitterness from the past. I have formed no new ties during my absence; have remained a stranger and a wanderer all these years. I have prospered, and have amassed a fortune, and was for a long time engaged in—But enough of business. Perhaps the longing for home still lived in my heart. I met a countryman of mine some months ago, and from him received unexpected information, which made me resolve to return here—Herman Böhm. Do you know the name, Arning?"

The doctor saw it all in an instant.

"Yes; I set his broken arm for him last year. He was—But what did you hear? Did he tell you of anything of special importance, Karl?"

"He did, indeed," nodded Berning. "He told me all about the scene at the death-bed of my poor brother. He had been summoned as a witness to the will. I know all. How infamous, Rudolph, to cast poor Henrietta's child adrift in order to become possessors of base riches! You know how dear my sister was to me? How she always relied upon me, her elder brother? Why

I even taught her to speak. Ah, Rudolph ! when I heard it all, it seemed to me that I was the greatest sinner on earth, living so peacefully and quietly, and owning great wealth, while poor Henrietta's child was thrown among strangers—aye, perhaps starving!"

The old physician laid his hand upon the arm of his friend, with a quiet smile.

"You forgot me, Karl. Was I not there to shield Toni?"

"You?" almost shouted Berning. "You, Rudolph? O, you good man! You faithful, true friend! I remember Henrietta was your ideal in your youth, and you have always loved her memory, and have loved her child for her sake."

Arning shook his head slowly.

"What do we old fellows know now of love?" said he, with a good-natured banter. "I still keep a place in my heart and life for your sister, to the exclusion of all others; that is all. But I have kept Toni at a good educational institute for several years, in order she might receive an education that would enable her to maintain herself. That was but little for me to do, and assuredly my duty."

The eyes of the old Australian glistened.

"I will not permit you to lose one *groschen* of what you have expended," said he, heartily—"not one *groschen*. But I never can thank you.

And now tell me: Where is my niece? Do you know anything of her whereabouts?"

The doctor looked at him earnestly.

"She is here," he answered; "but you cannot see her so suddenly. I fear she is going to have a severe illness. She has been living in Italy for some time past as companion to the Countess of Hartenstein, and came back here with that lady about a month ago, and met for the first time her cousin. She became deeply attached to him, and he evidently returned her affection; but suddenly—"

"One moment," interrupted his friend, angrily. "Is it Oscar of whom you speak? The son of that woman with the heart of stone? He shall never see her again. I shall take Toni with me to Adelaide at once."

The doctor shook his head.

"Of that later," he said. "Now come with me. You can see for yourself; her whole system seems fearfully shattered. Pray God all may yet be well."

He led the way to a bright, prettily furnished bed-chamber, and when he reached the door, signed to his companion to wait until he was called. The old man saw through the drawn *portière* a face that was the counterpart of his dead sister's; the same lovely eyes and curling brown hair, with a vague resemblance in every feature to her mother. But now her illness ren-

dered her countenance pale and restless ; and the doctor bent anxiously and lovingly over her. It grieved him deeply to see this poor, homeless child looking so helpless and ill, and he drew her gently to himself.

Toni was so weak that her voice could scarcely reach his ear. He did not ask any unnecessary questions. He comforted her, and strove to quiet her, first of all, and insisted that she should remain in bed.

" You are obliged to do it, Toni ; you are very ill, my poor child."

The unhappy girl shook her head.

" I cannot do it, dear doctor. Your comfort—your peace—"

She had risen while speaking, starting forward as if forced to fly ; but with the effort she fell fainting in the arms of her old friend.

A second later and Berning was also at the bedside. His eyes were blazing, and he clenched his fists angrily, as he muttered :

" And shall I give her to the villain who has caused all this trouble ? No, never, as long as I live ! "

" Silence !" said Arning, warningly. " We can at this moment count on nothing."

And the physician shuddered as he spoke.

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While Toni was lying in an unconscious con-

dition, anxiously watched day and night by her devoted uncle, Oscar was encountering many changes new to him. He was endeavoring to learn something in regard to the condition of his property, and was almost driven crazy by the multiplicity of cares which were crowded upon him. It was a most disheartening struggle into which he entered, understanding, as he did, absolutely nothing of its details. It made him fairly groan—all this was not his business.

He still visited the countess daily, but each morning resolved never to go again, but when evening came, his sense of isolation forced him again into the presence of that fascinating woman. The Countess Emilie, with her wondrous beauty and boundless fortune, could with little difficulty have induced a much more cautious man than Oscar to do foolish things. There was no hour, however, in which Oscar would not have given all he owned, and resigned all for which he hoped, in order to stand for one moment alone with Toni, holding her hand in his, while he looked into the eyes which were to him the surety of all goodness and purity, and which the blight of death could never dim.

Where could she be? He had heard nothing from her, and his uncle, too, had suddenly disappeared. Distrust and bitterness seemed to possess his soul more and more, and it was only in the charmed presence of the Countess of

Hartenstein that he ceased altogether to think. Nothing but the desire to wound the woman he loved had at first instigated him to pay such pronounced attention to the countess.

But he became reckless, and had then gone on with more assurance, almost forgetting the accumulated business difficulties that encompassed him. He was often made secretly anxious, however, by his mother's many earnest inquiries in regard to the condition of affairs. During his minority, Fräu Regina had put by interest upon interest, and now what had become in three short years of that great fortune?

The old lady often asked herself shudderingly whether she had been quite wise in training her son to understand so little the value of money, or to have such unlimited power over his possessions. As the complaints and murmurings grew louder, she ventured to ask Oscar about the condition of things, but he had answered after such a surly fashion, that she forebore making any further inquiries. These trifling money matters did not agitate him. His only anxiety was whether the countess would decide to go to Italy during the inclement winter weather; she had spoken several times of doing so, and without doubt expected him to follow her. Oscar, however, hardly felt assured that his means would permit him to winter at Rome or Naples, nor did he consider it prudent to be long absent

from his estate just at present. No taint had attached to his name as yet, but he realized he must win the countess at any price. If he became the legal possessor of this beautiful woman and her great wealth, it would only need a fraction of her money to cover all his obligations.

What a fair vision! Uncounted treasure! Millions!

Oscar felt that he must bring matters to a crisis.

Should he let the image of a poor, sad-eyed, brown-haired girl always stand in his way?

Should he be robbed of his all, and fall from the height to which he had attained, merely because of the memory of a silver-tongued siren who had bewitched him?

Absurd!

The lovely countess sat beside him on a low divan, the subdued, rosy light from the chandeliers played around them, and the diamonds on her fair hands glittered brightly.

"In another week we will depart, will we not, my friend? I say 'we,' because if you are not by my side Italy will be without charm for me this year."

He took her hand in his and put his other arm around her waist, feeling rather doubtful as to

the manner in which his advances would be received, notwithstanding all his assurance.

"In a week!" whispered he, "that is too soon—too soon at least, for my most heartfelt desire."

"You prefer remaining here?" she asked, smiling.

"Just here, where my home is, and where you, whom I love so fondly, must become my wife. Will you not remain until the first snow falls, Emilie?"

The countess was as gracious and self-contained as ever; her heart did not beat more quickly, neither did her cheek assume a warmer hue.

She answered lightly:

"You have your opinion, dear friend. Happiness and peace are to be found everywhere, if only one understands how to obtain them."

"We will remain until the first snow?" he asked, tenderly.

"When will it fall?" she said, laughingly.

When Oscar bade her good-night her tender and caressing manner quite overpowered him. Yes, she assuredly loved him, and her playful, coy manner was but the result of the homage she had received, the constant triumphs she was always obtaining, for—she assuredly loved him. How tender were her whispers! How melting the glance from her sparkling blue eyes. All

his thoughts and feelings seemed to echo the same refrain :

“ She loves me !”

When he reached home, earlier than was his wont, he found half a dozen dunning letters awaiting him. He opened the letters at random, and with little interest in their contents. The news of his engagement with the rich widow, would, he knew, silence all grumbling, and he would then be able to satisfy all demands upon his purse.

But his interest was finally aroused by a few short sharp words. A note of five thousand *thalers* would fall due on the next day ; it had been sold by the original lender, and the man who demanded payment was—Dahlberg !

His friend, his college chum, the man who knew all his financial difficulties, all his most private business affairs had at this critical time bought this note and now demanded his money !

As soon as Oscar could in some measure overcome the first natural feeling of alarm, he started immediately for the house of the advocate ; he felt that he could not wait until morning to face his enemy.

Dahlberg received him very coldly.

“ In what way can I serve you ?” said he, as though greeting an entire stranger for the first time.

Oscar had not come in order to plead. He in-

tended to pay the money that was due, but he wished to call Dahlberg to account for his action.

"Dahlberg, why did you buy this note for five thousand *thalers* from Wolff & Messmann?" he asked. "Are you trying to ruin me?"

"Yes," answered the young advocate without hesitation. "I will do all in my power to hasten your inevitable ruin, and shall leave no stone unturned to assist the rightful owner of Schorndorf to obtain her rights."

Oscar stared at him, not understanding what he said.

"The rightful owner?" he repeated.

"Yes, your cousin, Fräulien Armfeld, with whose fortune, years ago, the property was bought by your excellent father. You have stolen it, you and he, each after his own fashion. Perhaps you will deny that your cousin's sudden dismissal from the house of the countess, with whom she had always maintained pleasant relations, the day following the one on which I had informed you she was your cousin, was not your doing? Your distrust and deceit have broken her heart. She lies at death's door in the house of the good old physician. She has been deserted by every one—is alone in the wide world, all through the treachery of your father and yourself. You two have been her executioners."

Oscar had listened to this passionate speech

without attempting to interrupt it. To hear that Toni was dying overwhelmed him, and his inmost soul was convulsed by the accusations made against him.

When Dahlberg ceased speaking, Oscar felt that the terrible charge which had been made against his father could not be permitted to pass without reply.

"Explain to me more clearly what you mean regarding my father," he said, coldly. "You must understand that I cannot overlook such words as these."

"Naturally, and I am fully prepared. See here! Do you recognize the hand-writing of your dead father?" He held an old and yellow letter under the lamplight, but as Oscar reached out his hand to take it, he drew it quickly back. "You can see that I have made an accurate statement, surely?" he said.

"I can see that it is my father's writing," acknowledged Oscar. "Give me the paper, that I may learn its contents."

Dahlberg stepped to the table.

"With your permission, I will read it," he said, ironically. "This document is of unspeakable value." And then, after hastening through a short introduction, he read the following :

"I am sorry to have to write to you, my dear brother, that poor Henrietta has lost her hus-

band, and has been left, with her little daughter, without any means of support. Your generous gift of six thousands *thalers* I handed her immediately, and she will now be relieved from all pecuniary distress. You write that you know I will do as much as you have done for our dear sister. I have already done more than I could really afford, and my anxiety for our beautiful sister is at all times great. Henrietta tells me to thank you for her with a thousand tears and kisses. She is ill, and not able to write to you herself to-day.”’

Dahlberg looked up.

“The rest of this letter from your father to his brother in Australia is of no importance,” he said. “Our concern is with the six thousand *thalers* which Karl Berning sent in all good faith to his brother for the use of their sister. Where is this money? What became of it after reaching the person to whom it was addressed? It has disappeared—been embezzled—stolen. Is it not so?”

“And who will assert that my aunt did not receive the money immediately?” asked Oscar.

“I!” cried the young advocate, with flashing eyes. “The date on the stamp of this letter is just four days before the death of the unfortunate woman, and after her death there was not money enough to bury her, and a few of her old friends contributed the amount required to pay

all funeral expenses. Would there not have been money enough to buy a coffin if she had received six thousand *thalers* four days before? Hundreds of witnesses can testify that it was Rudolph Arning to whom she looked for aid in her last moments—not alone medical aid, but food, yes, even the very bed upon which she died was provided by him. Your father did not trouble himself about his dying sister; he did not think it necessary even to buy her shroud or go to her funeral."

Oscar stretched his arm out. He was pale and trembling with emotion.

"And were this all true," he said, "no blame attaches to me. I knew nothing of it until this very hour. Let Fräulein Armfeld take what belongs to her. I stand aside."

Dahlberg crossed his arms over his breast.

"And your own promise; you magnanimous man—your own heartless conduct—how about that? As you possess so much courage, go and gaze upon your victim before you speak in such a haughty tone. It is your name which Toni, in her fever, whispers. It is your perfidy which she, in her delirium, exposes."

Oscar turned to go.

"You speak from jealousy," he said, with a quiet he was far from feeling. "I understand that and will not in consequence demand the satisfaction which you, under like circumstances,

would have asked from me. Sue me for the note whenever you feel disposed. You strike your blow at the empty air, for I am from this hour no longer master of Schorndorf."

He went from the advocate's house feeling he had been stricken to the death, and not knowing whither to turn for comfort or advice. He felt there was nothing to combat, nothing hidden ; it was all just as Dahlberg had said ; and, indeed, he always had had a secret misgiving that something had been hidden from him by his parents, some mystery but now revealed.

Alarming and agitating thoughts crowded through his mind. His father was dead ; all his earthly accounts were settled forever ! But his mother lived, and he could talk the whole matter over with her. Had she known of the purloined gold, and, in spite of all, driven the poor orphan out into the world ? His heart beat high with passion and anxiety as he hastily entered his mother's room. When she saw him she realized instantly that some catastrophe had occurred.

"What has happened, Oscar?" she cried.
"Tell me what is the matter?"

"Wait," he said, looking steadily at her, and speaking very earnestly. "Give me a clear and straightforward answer, mother. What became of the six thousand *thalers* sent years ago from Australia by my uncle for his sister?"

Had a flash of lightening struck her to the ground, Fräu Berning's terror could not have been greater than when this question was asked her. Her face lost all color, her hands grasped the air, and then sank nerveless to her side.

"He lies, Oscar, he lies! Your father received nothing."

"But, mother, I know it; I have seen the proof, not an hour since, in the hands of Dahlberg. So tell me what became of the money?"

Fräu Berning was now trembling violently. She wrung her hands.

"It is a lie—a lie! Will your uncle make any accusations?"

"I do not know, mother; and that is a matter of little moment to me. It is the thought of my father's guilt that overpowers me. I will give Schorndorf, and everything belonging to it, to my cousin Toni, and indeed—"

A cry broke from his mother, and her eyes seemed to start from their sockets.

"You cannot do that, Oscar—not that! She shall never come in my house—the odious creature. As my son, you must stand by me at any price; you, my own, only son, must not yield to the enemy. Where is the proof that we did not deliver the money to the sick woman? Perhaps it was stolen by the people who were with her; perhaps she had debts to pay with it, or squandered it! Schorndorf is your inher-

itance and shall remain yours as long as you live."

He stood before her, pale as death and trembling heavily.

"It is as I thought," he said; "you knew all! It was your design to claim the property, and rob that poor, defenseless child—cast her out upon the world. Go, I know you not!"

His mother threw herself wildly at his feet, clasping his knees frantically.

"Mercy, Oscar, mercy!—that man lies—oh, he lies!"

But in her son's heart, the indignation and terrible excitement under which he suffered, choked all forgiving or kindly impulses. He freed himself almost roughly from this woman who had borne him, without one conciliatory word, and hurriedly left the room.

He shut himself up in his own chamber, and threw open a window, that he might feel the cool October air upon his brow. He had dreaded the thought of going to Italy until now. But he felt to-night that the sooner he started the better. He must get away from Schorndorf, miles and miles away, far beyond the sound of his native tongue. He would see the Countess Emilie and tell her everything, all the misery which had so suddenly overwhelmed him. He would pour out his heart to her, and thus measure the true depth of her affection for him.

Surely she loved him, and would not ask how much or how little of this world's goods he possessed. She would not hold him responsible for a sin his parents committed.

No sleep visited him during that long night, and he rose at daybreak and stood at his window musing sorrowfully over all his troubles. The old castle, with its surrounding meadow-lands, which he had so long considered his own, had so dearly loved—was, for the future, to be to him but a dream.

Perhaps Toni's wish would be fulfilled, and the wide stretch of marshy land would be transformed into fruitful fields, upon the now useless plain would be built the comfortable homes for the poor workmen. But would Toni recover?

"See your victim!" Dahlberg had said. "Do you know she is at death's door?"

Again he paced up and down.

"The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation!"—words fraught with terrible significance to him as he thought over the record that had just been disclosed to him.

He seemed to see Toni's great eyes as she called him again and again in her fever—seemed to hear the piercing shriek:

"Oscar! Oscar! Where are you?"

The perspiration stood in beads on his fore-

head. Was he going insane? His mother knocked timidly at the door, pleading for admission:

"Open the door, my son! I pray you, be merciful to me, and let me in!"

Oscar could not overcome the feeling of bitterness with which he now regarded his mother, and turned hastily from the door, drowning the low, supplicating tones with his heavy footsteps.

* * * *

Later in the day, after a few hours' restless sleep, Oscar rose unrefreshed, and prepared to make a morning call upon the countess.

How gracious would be her acquiescence when he should say:

"Let the carriage be ordered that we may ride to-day!"

Upon the lower floor of the palace of the countess were gathered all the household servants, waltzing and shouting, while the porter was whistling gayly for them, whiled he danced by himself. The gayety stopped suddenly as Oscar ascended the steps, the servants retreating hastily, while the porter answered the summons, arranging his careless attire while he went.

"Gracious, sir," he stammered. "I—that is—we—"

Oscar smiled.

"Is the countess at home?" he asked, kindly.

All the domestics now crowded forward.

"Did not Herr Berning know that the countess had gone away on a journey? Certainly it was rather sudden, but madam had been preparing, as Herr Berning knew."

Oscar hardly heard what they said.

"Gone away?" he murmured half aloud.

"Yes, Herr Berning; and here is a note she left for you."

Oscar took the note, and when again alone, read it.

"You are angry, my friend, and consider me faithless! Come to Naples and learn to comprehend some of the bright, cheerful aspects of life, and you will then do me justice. What we hope to obtain only appears to us really precious when our possession of it is delayed. Life is too short for animosity or regret. You will acknowledge that to me some day. Come to Naples. Farewell.
EMILIE."

Oscar laughed like one bereft of his senses, and went aimlessly on his homeward way.



CHAPTER V.

Toni lay for weeks at death's door. In her delirium she betrayed to both men the fact that she knew the whole history of the unsigned will, and that she thought continually of her faithless lover.

"I could not tell him who I was," she whispered, "I could not do it, but Dahlberg told him, and now I must die!"

Her uncle would clench his fist at these words, and mutter under his breath :

"He shall never see you again, never!"

No one knew of Oscar's whereabouts.

"Do you know whither he has gone, Rudolph?" asked Berning, one day.

The doctor shook his head.

"No one knows his present residence," he responded; "the proceedings in bankruptcy open to-day. His poor old mother! Where will she live in future, I wonder?"

Herr Berning did not answer, but the next

day his sister-in-law received through the post, from some unknown source, a sum sufficient to place her above all care for herself. But her boy was her terrible sorrow. Her time of trial had indeed come. Knowing nothing of Oscar, and not being able to ascertain anything concerning him, the poor woman went almost mad with the fancies which filled her brain.

After weeks of terrible illness, Toni began to recover, but her feebleness and helplessness made careful attention more necessary than ever. They conversed with her as little as possible, answering the occasional questions which she asked about her sickness. Her uncle told her what he thought would interest her, in regard to his own life, but no mention in those early days of her convalescence was made of Oscar.

One day Toni called him to her and asked, not about her quondam lover, but to his surprise, about the Countess of Hartenstein ; but when he told her the countess had gone to Italy, she fell into a long and deathlike swoon. After that, they kept a guard on their lips, and let nothing escape which could alarm her.

But one day, a short time after, she heard part of an animated conversation between her uncle and Herr Dahlberg, the young advocate.

“I will not do it!” her uncle said, energetically ; “I will not have the name of my dead brother dishonored. The grave is his protection, and I do

not need the money. I will always have enough to satisfy me, and what I have my niece will have. She will be rich without the possession of Schorndorf. Mother and son are in deep distress, and I will not be the one to hunt them down. No, Dahlberg, I renounce every legal claim."

After that, Toni could understand nothing more, as they lowered their voices. "Mother and son are in deep distress," her uncle had said. What could it all mean? If she were only able to make inquiries, only able to go away! But she knew it was futile to ask her uncle or the doctor for any information. A few days later, the young advocate called to see her, and Toni, in spite of a secret antipathy for which she could hardly account, received him almost joyfully, for he knew all, and would not be reticent, she felt sure, in answering her queries. She knew him but slightly. He had been the attorney for the countess, and in his brief visits at the palace, had always seemed eager, she remembered, to pay her homage whenever opportunity offered. She was glad he had come; she would question him.

Dahlberg placed in her hand a bouquet of fresh violets, which filled the room with the delicate fragrance of spring; while out of doors the snow still covered the earth with its wintry mantle. The two young people stood facing

each other, each pale and earnest, conscious of the gulf which separated them, and of the decisive words which must now be spoken.

Dahlberg spoke first.

"I am rejoiced, Fräulein Armfeld, that I am at last permitted to see you and to congratulate you upon your recovery."

Toni begged him to be seated, while she returned to the sofa from which she had risen when her visitor entered, still holding the violets in her trembling hand. To Herr Dahlberg her paleness and delicate appearance only enhanced her beauty, and his eyes told her without disguise what his heart would utter.

"Herr Dahlberg," said she, "pray put the violets in that glass yonder, and then tell me the news. Tell me all that has happened since I have been ill."

He divined her purpose, but related one thing after another, in order not to betray himself at once. Finally, he said:

"A mutual acquaintance of ours has disappeared—gone to ruin—and his true character has, perhaps, for the first time, been made known—Oscar Berning. Schorndorf has been sold under the hammer, and countless victims name him with imprecations."

Toni raised her head suddenly.

"Did you personally lose any money by his

bankruptcy, Herr Dahlberg?" she asked, impetuously.

He colored involuntarily as he thought of the purpose which had induced him to purchase Oscar's note.

"And," said Toni, looking him full in the face, "was it not you that instituted the proceedings against him, Herr Dahlberg?"

"There were others with me, Fräulein Armfeld. Oscar is a spendthrift, a man without—"

"He is my kinsman, Herr Dahlberg; and, more than that, he is absent at this moment. Pray do not forget yourself."

There ensued a painful pause. Then the young man sought to take Toni's hand.

"Fräulein Armfeld," said he, "are you aware of the fact that Herr Berning talks of taking you back with him to Australia? Are you willing to leave your fatherland forever?"

Toni started and her head sank wearily on her hand.

"I did not know it," she said, shudderingly. "He has told me nothing of our future plans."

"It is, however, his fixed determination," responded Dahlberg. "He intends to take you, and very soon, too; and for that very reason I came here to-day. You have no family, Toni. You are deserted and lonely. Will you venture to follow an old man, almost a stranger to you, across the ocean, to be left, in all probability,

entirely alone in a few short years? Your uncle is a good man, but an old one—over seventy—and his days upon earth are numbered. Toni, will you share my lot with me? Will you be my wife? I can offer you little, but I have a heart that beats for you alone, and I long to devote my life to your service. Will you consent? I have enough to give you all you can desire, and you can relinquish all claim to your uncle's property."

Toni had heard him quietly to the end, but he knew before she opened her lips that he had failed—that Toni Armfeld would never be his wife.

"Herr Dahlberg," answered a soft voice, "have you not betrayed the friend of your youth, in order to obtain what was his? Is that true, or do I err?"

He looked at her anxiously.

"What was his?" he responded, hardly grasping her full meaning.

"And is," answered she, trembling and deadly pale, but steadily—"and is, and to all eternity will remain his. You have bought Schorndorf, the home he loved, and are doubtless happy now in its possession, but—but let that suffice for you."

The silence for a minute or two was painful; then she heard again the voice of her would-be

suitors murmuring a farewell ; the door was shut softly and she knew she was alone.

She threw her arms above her with a gesture of despair.

"They have driven my dear love away from his home, defamed his character, deprived him of his all ; and even his own uncle has done nothing to save him. Unhappy man ! Perhaps he has no friend who can assist him—knows no one to whom he can turn in his hour of need.

She felt she could endure this feeling of wretchedness and ignorance no longer. Her heart was almost breaking as she conjured up the dangers by which her loved cousin might be surrounded. But she was now resolved to know, at whatever cost, all that was to be known.

When her uncle came in that evening bringing her, as usual, books and dainties to tempt her palate, she asked him abruptly and without any preface :

"Uncle, where is my cousin Oscar now ? I want to hear everything you can tell me about him. Where is he ?"

The old man looked at her. She was deadly pale at this moment. A quick, daring answer came to him.

" You are sure you wish me to tell you, Toni ?" he asked.

" Yes, uncle."

"Very well. Oscar is at Naples with the countess."

She received the information very calmly, but her voice sounded hollow and lifeless when, after a moment, she said :

"Uncle, I will go with you to Australia when you go."

When speaking of this conversation later to the doctor, Herr Berning seemed hardly at ease in regard to his victory.

"I had to do it, Arning," he said ; "it is better that she, even at the price of great anguish, should learn to forget this man. He would never have made her happy—doubtless never loved her at all."

The doctor shook his head.

"He has disappeared entirely," he said. "No one can find any trace of him."

"So much the better," nodded the old man. "So much the better. I pray she may never see him again."

Arning only smiled, but he did nothing to prevent his old friend carrying out his plans. He saw that Toni was legally adopted before they set sail, and even when the time of departure arrived contented himself with saying quietly :

"I shall see you both soon again."

Herr Berning shook his head.

"Then you must come out to me, old friend," he said.

Toni did not weep ; her heart was too full.

"It is to me like a funeral," she whispered, "and I am the corpse. Farewell ! My heart is broken and I care not whither I go."

"Karl," said Doctor Arning, "you hear her ? Why will you not tell her you know absolutely nothing of her cousin?"

But the obstinate old man turned away.

"It is for her own good, Rudolph," he said. "I will take all the responsibility."

The doctor kissed the pale, cold lips of the young girl once more, mounted his horse and rode away. Half an hour later the ship sailed.

One pale, worn-looking man watched from a distance the ship set sail, and realized that the stake for which he had played was lost—Dahlberg, through whose treachery this had come to pass.

* * * *

Two years had passed away since Herr Berning persuaded his niece to accompany him to Australia.

At Rosehill, a beautiful country residence not far from Adelaide, on a warm June evening were gathered together all the farm hands and household servants at their evening meal. It was a motley assemblage, among which England,

Ireland and Germany were each represented. On this evening they were discussing with animation their new master, who had just arrived, having only recently purchased Rosehill. His niece was to be their future mistress, and of her the coachman, more fortunate than his fellows, having caught a glimpse of her in Adelaide, now spoke.

"She is very beautiful," said he, "charming, but not to my taste; too pale and thin, a kind of a saint, you know, who will teach Sunday-school and visit all the old women."

On this evening, as had been the case on many another, one of the servants was absent from the supper, and did not know that Rosehill had been sold and would be inspected on the morrow by its new owner.

Under a cluster of low trees lay Bob, the shepherd, while not far distant the sheep, of which he had charge, roamed at will, and were watched by several large dogs. He was reading an old and dilapidated book, whose loose leaves were scattered around him, and for which he had but that morning paid his last dollar. It was Göethe's "Faust."

Perhaps he knew it all, and every word of the sublime tragedy sank deep into his heart, but on he read, missing no word, no scene. He was a lonely, disappointed man, to whom no new owner of Rosehill could bring either hope or

fear. He had lived his life long ago, and the dark, glistening eyes told a story of misery and endurance. A large black dog came up to him at last, rubbing his nose in his hand, and Bob threw aside his book in order to caress his only friend.

* * * *

The new master had come at last.

"It is the rich Herr Berning," whispered the people. "No one will starve under him."

Herr Berning took his niece through the house, courts, stables and grounds, to show her the new possessions of which she was mistress.

"Does it please you, my love?" he whispered.

She smiled in the still, cold fashion that had seemed a part of herself since their departure from Europe, as she thanked him for his goodness; but, in spite of all, tears were glistening in her eyes, and he felt that her heart was not here and she was but nursing her sorrow.

"Uncle," she said, abruptly, "do you ever think of poor Aunt Regina, in all her misery?"

The old man answered, hastily :

"Oh, child, she was provided for long ago."

Toni put her hand over her eyes.

"Come," she said, gently, "come, we must not speak of Germany, it makes my heart too heavy. Now you must show me the village!"

He heard the misery in her voice, and saw the

sorrow in her heart, which neither time nor change of scene had effaced, and the old man heaved a deep sigh. This was the third place which he had bought in the past two years, hoping that change of scene would benefit Toni.

He made no reply but showed her the miserable village with its wretched huts, and distributed some money among the villagers and farm hands. Bob, the shepherd, was not one of the number.

"He is a German, and very eccentric," said the steward, "and never cares for the company of the other lads, but an honest fellow withal; I will answer for him."

Berning laughingly said he would look after his countryman himself.

He rejoiced that his riches would enable him to alleviate to some extent, at least, the misery of the settlers, and felt that Toni would have something in which she could become interested.

"Is it not true," he said, pointing to the miserable hovels lying a short distance below them, "that the distress in these colonies is frightful?"

Toni shuddered.

"Uncle," she said, in a low voice, "one is forced to think it is wrong to indulge in personal grief or sorrow with so much suffering near us. We will enjoy our wealth by improving the condition of these poor people. We will help

them to build a school, and I will teach in it myself."

"God be praised!" thought the old man. "With something to occupy her mind she will certainly forget Oscar."

Aloud he gave her permission to do what she would in a most hearty manner.

"Now," he said, "we will go to see the sheep."

About a mile distant lay the sheep folds where the animals herded by the thousand during the night, and near by were the primitive huts of the shepherd lads who kept watch and ward.

Adjoining were the purple meadows, where the white rafflesia nodded its stately head, and in the distance the sheep were grazing.

The horses went on at a leisurely pace, while Toni and her uncle enjoyed the beautiful view, enhanced, as it was, by the perfect summer sky overhead.

As they passed by the shepherds' huts, Berning bethought himself of the herdsman whom he had not yet seen.

"Hello!" he shouted out. "Shepherd, where are you?"

There arose suddenly from the thicket just in front of the horse which Toni rode the figure of a man in the customary shepherd's garb, with dark hair, covered by a broad straw hat.

It was a face deathly pale, with deep-set eyes,

that looked into Toni's for a moment as, without any foreboding, she gazed at the man who seemed to her an apparition.

From the maiden's lips came a piercing cry, and she convulsively pulled the horse's bridle, and in a second both horse and rider were off across the fields at a mad pace. Herr Berning did not understand what had happened, but was after his niece like a shot, and after a mile's race his thoroughbred was beside the brown horse, and both were drawn up by the roadside, trembling and covered with sweat.

"What was the matter with the horse!" asked Berning, who knew his niece was an accomplished horsewoman.

"Are you--"

"But, Toni," he interrupted, "you are fainting! My pet, what has happened to you?"

He supported the swaying girl, and saw with alarm that she was pale as death and was breathing spasmodically.

"Child," cried he, "my love, what is it?"

She pointed toward the sheepfolds and uttered the one word "Oscar!"

"Who?" cried Berning. "What do you say?"

Toni began weeping violently.

"Oscar!—I saw him. He is the German herdsman!"

"Oh— Impossible! A thousand times impossible!"

The old man scarcely knew whether this startling news brought him joy or sorrow. His nephew here—in this extraordinary position! He could hardly bring himself to believe it was true.

"Come," he said ; "we will see."

Her pale face flushed excitedly.

"You go alone, uncle, and leave me here."

He understood her and raised no objection, pressed her hand warmly and then jumped into the saddle as actively as a man of thirty.

"If it is he, I will not disown the son of my only brother," thought he.

Toni remained alone. The horse ate the grass at her feet, and the soft, mild summer air cooled the brow of the nervous, overwrought girl. How clearly came before her every detail of that moment; she seemed to see his eyes still looking into hers, while the heavy, unkempt beard, which covered the pale face, only marked the more clearly to her the discouragement and utter hopelessness of the inner man.

How sharp was the contrast.

At their last meeting he had stood before her in the *boudoir* of the Countess of Hartenstein, surrounded by all the luxuries that money could buy, and everything about himself was in keeping with all his surroundings—and now—an

under-servant of her uncle, a herdsman among strangers in the far Australian bush.

She trembled for him as she wondered what effect such a change would have upon one of so proud a disposition—she prayed that all would be righted for him.

In about an hour her uncle returned, and she knew before he spoke, that he had discovered nothing ; she leaned for support against a tree, feeling instinctively that she had still much to bear.

“ It was a vision, Toni,” he said, earnestly, “ an apparition, God knows what, only no reality. The hut is empty ; I have searched every bush, every pen, and not found a living creature.”

“ Not—not the shepherd ? ”

Her eyes glowed strangely, and her voice had a shrill, unnatural sound that made the old man heart-sick.

“ I saw no one, Toni ; believe me, it was a vision ; perhaps Oscar has just died.”

She shook her head.

“ No, he lives, he is here. I have seen him as I see you, uncle. Will you do nothing to discover him ? ”

“ Everything,” answered her uncle, dispiritedly, “ everything, my dear child ; let us turn back ; the overseer shall bring every man about the place to me. If you really saw a living man, he

must be reached in some way, and brought before you again."

The horses' heads were turned, and they rode back rapidly, and Herr Berning gave the overseer orders to find the shepherd immediately; two or three long, anxious hours went by, which seemed to Toni an eternity, and then the men returned with the word that Bob, the shepherd, had disappeared, and could not be found.

"Even the dogs," said the overseer, "could not find him; his few belongings remained in the hut, also the book which he read so much, but he himself was gone."

The uncle and niece looked at one another. The herdsman's sudden disappearance was a confirmation of Toni's statement. But where should they look for him?

"Do you know anything about this man, Mr. Tompkins?" asked Herr Berning; "what is his name, and what was his business or trade originally?"

"That, sir, was what was so surprising; he was a gentleman, a scholar; he came to Port Adelaide about two years ago and tried to get some clerical position, but failed, and when I met him he was in sore distress; so I brought him out here on the farm, where he has since tended the sheep and lived in a hut by himself. He calls himself Robert Schorndorf."

Until now Toni had listened silently, but at the name of "Schorndorf" she gave a loud cry.

"Tompkins," said the old man, his voice trembling while he spoke, "I have reason to believe that this man of whom you speak is a relation of mine. Where can he have gone that we cannot find him?"

The overseer answered, thoughtfully:

"He cannot have gone into the bush, for yonder there are for miles and miles neither house nor field nor tree. He must have started on foot for Port Adelaide, otherwise he would be in danger of starving."

Berning arose.

"That is enough," he said, energetically. "You are right, Tompkins. I will want my horse this minute, to go in search of him."

Toni sprang toward him. She seemed to forget the presence of the overseer. Her only thought was for Oscar.

"Uncle," she begged, "let me go with you. Do not go on horseback, but take the light wagon. Something may have happened to him, and I must see him, and look upon his face again."

The old man kissed her.

"Do you, then, love him so dearly?" he said, sadly.

There had never been any talk between the two about her cousin; no questions had ever

been asked. Now, however, she answered, unhesitatingly:

"Very dearly, uncle; very dearly. O! Take me with you!"

He ordered the light wagon, and when it came, placed her silently in it, and they started off in the clear morning sunlight, their horses fairly flying along the road. No word was spoken, but both hearts were full to overflowing.

All travelers along the road were hailed, and inquiries made as the fugitive, but no one could give them any information. They scoured the country round, and toward the eve of the second day, with spent horses and sad hearts, they waited in a roadside hut until the morning light should enable them to continue their search.

At daybreak the old man and his nearly exhausted niece were on their way again. They had started but a few minutes, when Herr Berning's eye lighted, and he exclaimed:

"See! Here are gold-seekers coming—a whole caravan—on their way to the mines. God is good. We may find him before night."

He had an idea that among these people his nephew might have taken refuge.

"Keep up your courage, my love!" he cried.
"We will find him!"

His niece's eyes, with their wild expression, made him shudder. He realized for the first

time that if Oscar was not found, she, too, would be lost. After an hour's time, they came up to the halting-place of the band, where the camp-fire seemed to give them friendly greeting. Some children were dancing and singing an old German song. Herr Berning leaned over Toni as she lay back on the cushions, too weak from excitement to sit up.

"Come, dear," he said. "We will go and find him."

"I cannot, uncle. Go alone, I beg."

He kissed her, and started on his search with heavy heart, but to all his queries he received only disheartening replies. He went from one group to another, but no one had seen the German. He felt he dared not return to the wagon alone, for it would kill Toni. He remained for a few minutes beside a group of men whom he had been interrogating, and who were whispering to one another.

"You must surely have met the man whom I seek," he said. "It is not possible for you, who have just come from Adelaide, to have missed him. I will give a thousand dollars to the man who can tell me where to find him."

The offer acted as an electric shock. Berning saw at a glance that the men had been lying to him.

"I will tell you!" cried the first man.

"One half for me, or there will be trouble!" said the second.

Berning controlled his rising anger.

"There are three of you," he said, coldly. "I will give you each five hundred dollars. Now tell me what you have to tell."

The first speaker started forward.

"I will lead you," he said, "and my companions will accompany me, that you may give us the gold together, otherwise your life will be of no more account to us than this butterfly's, which I crush under my foot. In this wilderness there is only one law—the law of the strongest—and that is why we poor devils, ourselves almost starving, could not take your man any farther with us. He lies over there."

Herr Berning could hardly gasp:

"Is he dead?"

"Oh, no, only exhausted; but we had no place for him in my caravan. Come with us now; it is not very far."

The four men walked nearly a mile before they came to the summit of a little hill, where there was much high grass and many wild flowers were in bloom. The gold finders pointed down a narrow footpath.

"There is where he lies."

Berning went on with light but rapid steps, until he came upon a manly form stretched face upward upon the grass; the eyes were closed

and he lay as one asleep, or, perhaps, dead. Berning could scarcely recognize in this man the handsome and vigorous youth he had seen so few short years before. Blood of his blood—his only brother's son.

"Oscar," he said, with difficulty restraining his emotions, "my poor, dear boy."

The unfortunate man opened his eyes and made an effort to rise, as though he would escape, but sank back exhausted.

"Let me die here, uncle," he whispered. "I know it is unworthy of me to seek death, but I so long for peace; I have nothing for which to live."

"Nonsense, my dear boy! Nonsense!" said his uncle, taking hold of him. "Your cousin is waiting; come quickly!"

"That I may become a shepherd again? Better to die here."

Berning handed him some wine.

"How did you come here anyway, Oscar?"

The eyes of the young man filled with hot tears.

"How came I here, uncle? I will tell you: because I was of no use either to myself or any one else, because—"

His voice broke, and he sank fainting back upon the grass. The gold-seekers carried the almost lifeless body back to the wagon which Berning had already hastened to summon. His

loud call had been heard in the distance, and, as they came toward the wagon, Toni sprang from it and came toward them with outstretched arms.

"He lives, dear girl, he lives! He has only swooned!"

And Toni flew to him breathless, almost crazed.

"Oscar!" she gasped. "Oscar! Where is he?"

* * * *

It was easier to catch the fugitive than to bind him. As soon as Oscar had recovered himself he wanted to be away again, and his uncle's earnest prayers were all that could induce him to remain.

He was persuaded finally to become the teacher of the school just starting in the village, but nothing could induce him to live at Rosehill. His uncle let him have his own way.

Oscar and Toni were apparently but chance acquaintances; their former intimate relations were not alluded to in any way, and they avoided one another whenever it was possible. But in the village they were naturally thrown much together in their school duties.

There Uncle Karl laughed secretly at this mutual avoidance—once he asked his nephew how long he should remain in Australia.

"I leave the country on the next ship and do

not care whither I go, so that I do not return to Germany."

Toni thought: "He does not speak the truth ; he is only anxious to go wherever the countess awaits him."

She resolved to make an opportunity as soon as possible to question him in regard to his relations with the countess. She soon had a chance to interrupt him with the question :

"That occurred while you were living in Naples, did it not, Oscar?"

"No," he answered, "I have never been in Naples."

"Ah! and yet I heard from several that you were with the Countess Emilie."

"No," said Oscar. "Whoever believed that I was an admirer of the countess, and followed her to Italy, did not know me. I was once on the point, from very despair, of offering myself to her, but the countess saved me from this false step by her departure to Italy. I have never seen her since."

Toni remained silent but the words, "from very despair," were an admission that sounded very sweet to her ears. After that she treasured every glance and every word. Oscar carried in his heart no other image; he was quite free ; she trembled at the thought, and the color came and went in her lovely face whenever she heard

his footstep. Yet, fearful of betraying herself, she still sought to avoid him.

Oscar understood nothing of all this. But he imagined that she avoided him thus openly in order to warn him against any new advances. All his old distrust came back more strongly than ever; he devoted himself more and more to his work among the villagers, and came less frequently to the house on the hill. The winter finally came to an end, and the spring rushed in with the breath of her sunshine, and the fragrance of her flowers.

One morning Herr Berning sat at an open window, writing a letter to Germany to his old friend Arning :

“ I believe that you were right, Rudolph, and that you will see us back again in the fatherland. You know you exhorted me to leave all things to God’s decision. Well, old friend, He has not forsaken us. I brought my niece here, almost by force, from the other end of the world, in order that she might forever avoid meeting my brother’s son—and we find him here in our midst. While I write you, I see them walking in the garden, but only chatting as cousins, however. Yet I feel that the day is near at hand when they will become lovers.”

And yet the old man’s prophecy was far from fulfillment in Oscar’s mind.

One day he came to Toni and begged for a word with her alone.

"Toni," he said, earnestly, "I have come to say good-by to you. I will not speak to my uncle, he would strive to make me alter my plans, and my determination is fixed. I go, Toni, because I am forced by circumstances. Will you say farewell to the old man for me?"

"And do you never intend to come back here, Oscar?" asked Toni, quietly.

"Never! Never, so long as I live!"

"And—and may I ask what is driving you away?"

"Ah" he answered, unwillingly, "one word that I cannot say— My hands are empty, my life is a failure—I—have no place close to the millions of my uncle. Farewell, Toni, and God guard you!"

"One moment," she whispered, pale and trembling, "that word, Oscar, which you cannot speak, shall I say it for you?"

He looked at her.

"You?—You?"

"Yes, I," she whispered—"I, Oscar; shall I tell uncle that he can leave his fortune to whom he will, but not to me? Shall I tell him I wish to marry a poor teacher and share with him his cares and troubles for all time? Oscar, may I tell him that I am too rich to need his millions?"

He had her in his arms and was pressing her

madly to his breast, almost before she had finished speaking.

"Toni, forgive me, I beg," he said, "for all my unfeeling words, and my continued mis-judgment of you. How I have allowed myself to be deceived!"

She could not speak for tears, but her caresses answered him.

* * * * *

Another year had flown by. In a pretty house in a street not far from Schorndorf sat two old people talking earnestly. They had been strangers for years, and a feeling of bitter hatred had grown up between them. Poor old Frau Regina and her brother-in-law had viewed life through different glasses.

Herr Berning had lived here since his niece's marriage. He had bought back Schorndorf, and given it to Toni as her marriage portion, and had left the young people alone.

Oscar was busy from morning to night, either superintending the clearing of the waste land or in the meadows above, but always industrious, and looking well after the interests and welfare of the tenants.

Uncle Karl visited them almost daily, but he thought it better so have his own home.

He was greatly surprised at the unexpected visit of his brother's widow on this pleasant morning. He was startled, too, at her appear-

ance—a pale white-haired, broken-down old woman, instead of the stately dame he remembered. She was so feeble that he went forward and led her to a seat.

She came, she said, to beg him to do something to soften her son's anger against her.

"Will you not give me back my only son?" she pleaded, piteously. "Will you not be merciful to me?"

He pressed her cold, nerveless hand.

"I will, indeed! I will, indeed, so help me God!"

"Then listen to me."

It was impossible for him to stop her as she began her sad tale.

"I had a lover in my youth," said Oscar's mother, "to whom I was affianced—one whom I had known from my childhood, and whom I loved with all the passion and tenderness of which I was capable. We expected to be married soon when I took the position of governess in your brother's house, in order to assist your sister Henrietta in the completion of her education. My dowry was ready. Penny by penny, piece by piece, I had saved enough not to go to my lover empty-handed. He had just received an appointment as a teacher in the city schools, and I thought I was the happiest creature living, when—

"But I cannot go into details calmly even

now. My whole life was changed in a day. Karl, your sister robbed me of my lover. Her beauty made him forget both duty and honor. He married her, and I was left in despair. What I suffered no words can tell.

"It was with a vengeful and reckless feeling that I accepted your brother, Andreas, some months later, but I did not deceive him. I told him of my former lover, but he said he loved me and that I would in time love him in return. But it was a wretched marriage, and even the birth of our son brought us no happiness. Our money was gone, and we were in a wretched condition when the money came from you for your sister. It was I who silenced your brother's conscience, and stole the gold. It was I who robbed your dying sister; for two days later she was laid in her grave. I told myself that it would have done her little good anyway. I had no feeling of remorse. I hated her, even in her grave. Then Andreas brought the little child home, in spite of all I could say. I tried prayers and threats, but your brother was resolved and they were of no avail. There sat at my table daily the child who was the image of her who had robbed me my life's happiness. I lost all the peace which otherwise I might have had, even though our marriage was loveless. My son Oscar was sent away to a distant school and was brought up, partially at least, among

strangers, while this hated child was always in our midst. Was it any wonder that I cast her off when your brother died? Was it any wonder I did not divide the inheritance, but gave all to Oscar? I was determined he should be happy, and get all the good things of life that it was possible to obtain. I had bought them dearly, and Oscar should have the benefit.

“The road I took led not to happiness or prosperity. God has humiliated me, and broken my pride in these lonely years. When Oscar left me, without a word of explanation or farewell, I was, indeed, bereft.

“Rudolph Arning, that true, good man, came to me later and bade me hope, for Oscar was with you, but my pride has thus far prevented me seeking him, and striving to make peace. Now I feel that I can endure it no longer; and, unless I can be near my boy again, I shall die of grief. Will you tell them both all I have just told you? Say I wish them to know it. Will you be so kind to a poor sinner, who has no other hope in the whole world?”

The old man quieted her with kind, gentle words, and gave her an assurance, as they separated that still Sabbath morning that all would yet be well. How much easier, he thought, to fall into temptation than to extricate ourselves from the weight of woe that follows in the wake of wrongdoing.

Uncle Karl spoke no word to Oscar of his mother. There were other ways to influence his nephew preferable to any persuasion of his. He told Toni about the visit, and she went immediately to her aunt and welcomed her as her husband's mother. But no word was said to Oscar until his child was born. When he entered the room to see his first-born, he found his mother by Toni's bed with her grandchild in her arms.

Fräu Regina was trembling violently, and an ashy paleness overspread her countenance as her eyes met her son's stern glance.

"Oscar," whispered Toni, faintly, laying her hand on his mother's arm, "this is your mother. Be good to her, dearest."

And Doctor Arning came forward smiling.

"Oscar, now that you are a father, you cannot harbor an unkind thought against your old mother?"

No, no; he could not. His arms enfolded the two, his weeping mother and his little son, the angel of peace whose little hands had brought to them the olive branch. All was well now.

* * * * *

Dahlberg had left Germany before Oscar and his wife returned from Australia, and was never heard of again.

During the following summer, the Countess of

Hartenstein returned to Schlossberg. She called very soon at Schorndorf, in order, as she coolly said, to renew her acquaintance with her former companion. Her real object was to try to bring Oscar once more within reach of her fascinations. She did not attempt to hide her desire to make Toni jealous. Her feeling of bitterness toward the man who had not thought it worth while to follow her to Italy was intense ; and she resolved to make the young wife suffer.

And, in the first moment, Toni trembled for fear her new-found happiness should be stolen from her, but only in the first moment.

"Rest quietly, my love," Oscar whispered, seeing the troubled look in her eyes. "She will not come again, for I, in a few polite words, have forbidden her my house."

"You, Oscar?" she asked, in a surprised tone.
"You?"

"Yes, sweetheart. That women could never lead me astray with her folly; but there is no need to renew our acquaintance with one whose nature is so unfeeling and untrue."

Toni laid her head upon his breast. The last shadow had been banished forever from her heart.

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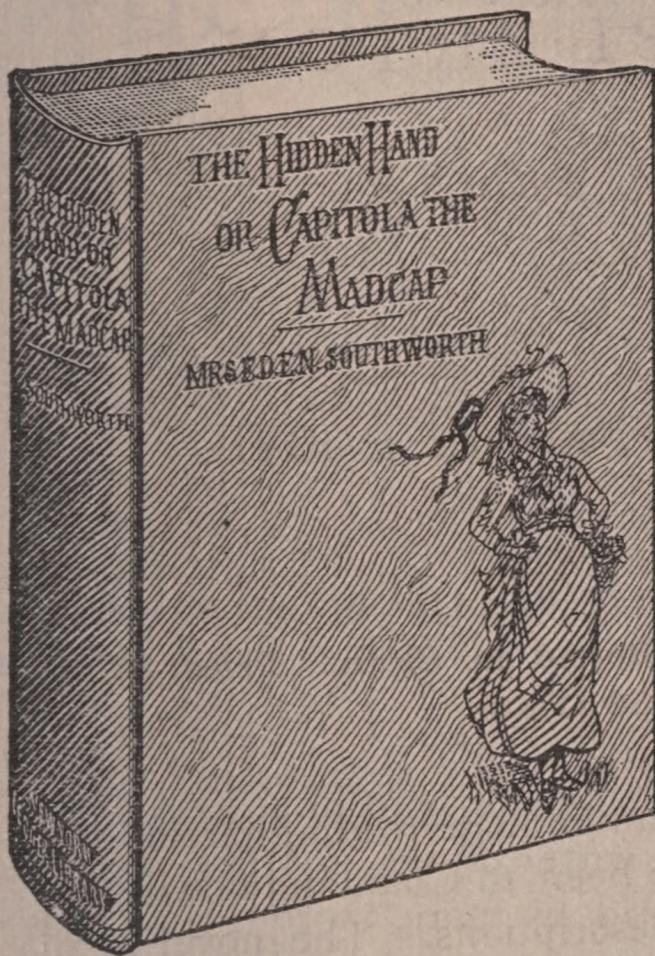
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